

Fuel price hike

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The price hike of rice would be evident in a day or two.

Soya bean was sold at Tk 116-120 per litre while super palm oil at Tk 108-112 and palm oil at Tk 103-108 at retail markets.

The price of eggs shot up by Tk 7-10 a dozen, selling at Tk 72-75 yesterday.

"We were already in trouble as the prices of essentials increased after the budget," said a consumer at Karwan Bazar, adding, "How will I run my family if the price of each item goes up by Tk 6 in a day when the income remains the same?"

Besides the fuel price hike, the ongoing inclement weather has affected especially the prices of vegetables that shot up by Tk 2-5 a kg at different kitchen markets.

The price of crude edible oil rose to Tk 1,500 per tonne on the international market from Tk 1,450 while the price of palm oil rose to Tk 1,275 from Tk 1,250 within a week, said to Fakhrul Alam, country manager of Malaysian Palm Oil Council.

"The rise in the prices of petroleum products in the international market is the reason behind the increase," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Wholesalers at Moulavibazar market in Old Dhaka, meanwhile, alleged that a section of traders were making money by increasing the edible oil prices unusually in the name of fuel price hike.

Our Chittagong correspondent reported that the prices of different essentials including rice, edible oil and pulses marked a sharp rise in both wholesale and kitchen markets on Tuesday morning.

"The announcement of fuel price hike at the end of the month came as a double blow for us because we were virtually empty-handed," said Zahirul Islam, assistant professor of Chittagong City College.

Azizul Haque, a retail trader at city's Chawkbazar, said the price of edible oil of all brands have increased by Tk 10 per litre while the price of Chingirica rice jumped to Tk 95 from Tk 72 per kg.

The prices of Miniket, Pijam and Jirashali rice also increased by up to Tk 4 a kg, he said, fearing the increase may continue over the next few days as the transport cost increased by Tk 2,500-3,500.

The prices of different varieties

of pulses had already gone up by Tk 5-10 a kg at the retail markets.

Pulses imported from Nepal was selling at Tk 90-94; the price was Tk 85 last week.

Our correspondent in Dinajpur reports: Coarse rice was selling at Tk 32-34 per kg; the price was Tk 30-32 a few days ago. The prices of soya bean and mastered oil increased by Tk 7 and Tk 10 reaching Tk 120 and Tk 130 per kg.

The price of sugar also rose by Tk 3 per kg. "People in the low-income group are finding it increasingly difficult to manage household expenditures in the wake of the never-ending price spirals of daily essentials," said a consumer in the town.

Our Sylhet correspondent also reported sudden rise in the prices of essentials at city markets, especially the price of rice that shot up by Tk 50-100 per 50kg sack on the wholesale market.

Our correspondent in Rajshahi reports: Bus fares in all routes from Rajshahi increased from yesterday as petroleum products were being sold at exorbitant prices instead of the government-fixed rates.

Kerosene was selling at local markets at Tk 60 a liter although the government-fixed rate is Tk 55.

The price of a LPG cylinder--fixed at Tk 1,000 on Monday--rose to Tk 1,350.

The prices of different commodities also shot up in Bogra.

VULNERABLE INDUSTRIES

There are 50 big industries in the southwestern region that may go on the verge of closure because of the price hike of furnace oil, said Akbar Ali, chairman of Shamim Metal Industries in Khulna.

All these big, medium and small industries running as losing enterprises would shut down if the government does not give subsidy or re-fix the price of furnace oil, he told our correspondent in Khulna.

Khulna Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Shaharuzzaman Martuza said the price hike would also affect the economy of the region and law and order would be hampered as prices of rice and other essentials had already gone beyond the buying capacity of people.

The prices of different varieties

Gas, power

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The meeting was told that the number of CNG filling stations has risen to 229 from only 18 in last four years, which helps in preventing rise in the price of fuel oils.

The CA asked for identifying the bottlenecks in solving the gas and electricity problems, round-the-clock monitoring by a team and strong coordination between power and energy divisions.

He also emphasised immediate solution to power problem in Chittagong through installing rental power plants and non-gas-based power plants as well.

As an austerity measure, the CA called for steps to limit energy consumption and "that should start from government offices".

Tapping alternative sources of energy, like coal and solar energy, for a long-term solution also came up for discussion at the meeting.

CA's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim briefed newsmen about the meeting.

Members of the Council of Advisers attended the meeting at the CA's office. Cabinet secretary and secretaries concerned were also present.

PSI company

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involved in various sorts of irregularities.

A payment of over Tk 52 crore was given to Bureau Veritas by the government for pre-shipment inspection in 2006-2007 fiscal year, sources said.

The five companies together received an amount of Tk 174.9 crore from the government for the task in the same fiscal year.

Hasina's petition

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Special Court-5 at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex will also rule on the same day on the bail petition filed by co-accused and former health minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim.

On June 13 last year, Managing Director of Eastcoast Trading Pvt Ltd Azam J Chowdhury charged Hasina and Selim with extorting Tk 2.99 crore from him in exchange for awarding the contract for setting up the Siddhirganj Power Plant in Narayanganj.

The special court was expected to dispose of the two petitions, filed on June 19, yesterday.

The date for cross-examination of the prosecution witness and complainant would be fixed after disposal of the petitions.

Making out the case for Selim's bail, his counsels said the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court relaxed the provisions for bail in cases filed under the Emergency Powers Rules.

Saying the former health minister made his confessional statements under duress, Advocate Sahara said Selim appealed for withdrawing the statement when he was first produced before the court.

Advocate Rezaul Rahman said the case was filed against Selim on mala fide intention as his confessional statement was made available on CD in the market.

"How come was it possible and why was it done?" he asked, adding that the case was nothing but a bid to destroy the two cousins politically.

Selim had no involvement in the alleged corruption, he said, adding that his client needs proper treatment and that he would comply with the conditions if granted bail.

Prosecution lawyer Syed Shamim Ahsan opposed the bail prayer saying the matter has already been disposed off by the higher court.

He also said they have enough evidence to prove the allegations against the accused.

US envoy

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secretariat yesterday morning.

Asked whether he informed the home adviser about the US position, he said, "I have told many times before (about the emergency) and that has been reported in the media. I think the government understands our view."

"I hope there will be progress to this end," Moriarty said adding that the caretaker government has been working to hold a credible election.

The US ambassador hoped that the country's political parties would come forward to reach an agreement.

Saarc conference

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observers, have agreed in principle to provide grants for creating a regional climate change fund.

The experts said the thematic areas of the draft are adapting to the climate change, forming policies and finding out actions for climate change mitigation, actions for technology transfer, creating fund for investment in research, working on climate change education, training and awareness based on New Delhi work programme, monitoring, assessment and management of impact risks caused by climate change, and capacity building programmes for the Saarc member states to deal international negotiations.

The experts committee also finalised a few prioritised action plan including capacity building for clean development mechanism (CDM) projects.

India, which is implementing 342 CDM projects at present, will share its experiences with other Saarc countries in this regard.

Bangladesh is presently implementing two CDM projects while six other Saarc countries are yet to launch any.

On priority basis the member countries will start monitoring the climate and weather including rise in sea level and trend of different natural calamities and share the information. The experts also suggested taking help of the media when required.

Major party leaders

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Other BNP leaders who collected application forms are former district general secretary Enamul Haque, former organising secretary Esrad Ali Isa, former woman lawmaker Jahan Panna, local Jubo Dal President Mosaddek Hossain Bulbul, and District Mohila Dal General Secretary Shahidun Nahhan Kazi Hena.

All prospective candidates from BNP will sit together before the July 13 deadline for withdrawal of candidacies, and will decide on one person who will stay in the race for mayor while everybody else will withdraw their candidacies, said Enamul Haque.

Meanwhile, a crisis developed in the local unit of AL-led 14-party coalition as Workers Party, a component in the coalition, opted to nominate its Politburo Member Fazle Hossain Badsha as the mayoral candidate while AL is under pressure for nominating its Rajshahi City Unit General Secretary AHM Khairuzzaman Liton.

The local AL office was shut down last night with party activists vowing to keep it closed until the party's nomination goes to Liton.

Other BNP leaders including City Unit BNP Member Secretary Shahruzzaman Mortuza and General Secretary of District BNP Advocate Shafiqul Alam Mona also collected application forms.

BARISAL
Convener of Barisal City AL Shawkat Hossain Hiron, Joint Convener Alamgir Hossain Khan Alam, and City Jubo League Joint Convener Mahmudul Haque Mamun collected applications for candidacies while from BNP its former city unit president Ahsan Habib Kamal, its expelled leader Ebaidul Haque Chan, District President of Tati Dal Abdur Rahman Tapon collected the forms.

Nagorik Parishad President Advocate Enayet Pir Khan also collected an application form for contesting in the poll there under the banner of his organisation, reported our Barisal correspondent.

KHULNA
At a news conference yesterday,

Lifting of emergency

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formal speech at the dialogue.

The AL had earlier threatened to boycott the talks if the government did not release Hasina, who was finally set free for eight weeks on medical grounds on June 1 last.

The AL president later directed her party leaders to go to the formal dialogue with the government.

Besides the six-point demand, the AL would ask the government not to hold elections to Upazila Parishads before the parliamentary polls.

"At the dialogue we'll speak in the greater interest of the country, including democracy. We'll not merely press our party interests," AL presidium member Motia Chowdhury told The Daily Star last night.

"We'll also urge the government to release our sick party leaders on humanitarian grounds," she said.

BNP plans

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matter as the local body elections are not meant to be political.

Central leaders during their probable district tours would discuss the matter with grassroots leaders of the party, said BNP leaders adding that a number of local BNP leaders have already collected nomination forms to take part in the local body polls.

DELWAR MEETS CITY LEADERS
BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday held a meeting with leaders from Demra, Shyampur and Jatabari units of BNP at his Nam flat.

Delwar while addressing the leaders said the 1/11 was carried out only to foil the democratic system in the country. "Local and foreign conspirators were involved in it."

He also said the present government should hand over power to an elected government without further delay as this government has failed to ensure food and security for the citizens.

Biman flight

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as its hydraulic pipe was not working," a high official of the airline told The Daily Star last night.

"We have sent spare parts and engineers by a Riyadh-bound plane today and hope that the problem will be fixed by tomorrow," added the official wishing anonymity.

When asked about the stranded passengers, the Biman official said all the passengers of the flight have been kept at different hotels in Riyadh.

Incidents of delay and cancellations of Biman flights have become a common place these days.

Biman officials said sometimes they have to cancel flight schedules due to technical glitches and shortage of aircraft.

They, however, hoped that the situation will improve after the arrival of several new aircrafts for which Biman had signed an agreement with US plane-manufacturing company Boeing on June 26.

Stop digging

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doing such public works.

The CA also instructed that, if necessary, a committee should be formed to find out the causes of delay in doing public works.

Meanwhile, the country experienced moderate to heavy rainfall for the second day yesterday, causing water logging in the low-lying areas.

According to the Met office, the highest 99 mm rainfall was recorded in Chandpur in last six hours until 6:00pm yesterday.

Dhaka experienced only 2 mm rainfall in the last 12 hours ending in 6:00pm, while Faridpur 82 mm, Chittagong 19 mm, Hatia 84 mm, Cox's Bazar 45 mm, Rangpur 26 mm and Patuakhali 29 mm.

According to the bulletin of Flood Forecasting and Warning Center, significant rainfall recorded during the last 24 hours until 6:00am yesterday was 146 mm in Kushtia, 105.5 mm in Sirajganj, 101.5 mm in Lama, 100 mm in Dewanganj, 94 mm in Cox's Bazar, 92 mm in Jamalpur and 87 mm in Dhaka.

The bulletin said water level in the Brahmaputra, the Ganges and the South Eastern Hill basins markets rise yesterday.

WB okays

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Xian Zhu, World Bank country director for Bangladesh, said, "This is one of the operations in a series of the World Bank's planned support to respond to government of Bangladesh's request for rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance in the aftermath of the cyclone."

The two other interventions--a quick disbursing budget support that has already been approved and the longer-term support for disaster management, an emergency recovery credit--are currently under preparation, he added.

After the devastating cyclone Sidr, the World Bank offered \$250 million short, medium and longer-term support to help the millions of affected people to recover and to strengthen disaster mitigation systems.

Meena Munshi, World Bank senior economist and team leader for the project, said, "This project will provide them with financial resources to gradually restore their lives and livelihoods. It will also help in establishing community institutions, which in the longer term can identify, plan and carry out their own development priorities."

"The \$35 million Disability and Children at Risk Project will support the government in expanding the coverage, use, and quality of social-care services for these vulnerable groups."

The project will also help build the capacity of NGOs, Disabled people's organisations, and government agencies that provide support to the disabled and their families, and advocates for greater disability awareness, inclusion, and empowerment.

Tarique, Babar

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deferred the hearing until yesterday as Tarique had not appeared before the court due to "illness".

Of the eight accused in the case, Abu Sufian, director of Bashundhara Group concern East-West Property Development Ltd, was produced before the court yesterday.

On October 4 last year, Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Deputy Assistant Director Abu Kashem filed the bribery case involving the murder of Bashundhara Group Director Humayun Kabir Sabbir with Ramna Police Station, accusing six persons including Babar.

Tarique and former BNP lawmaker Qazi Saleemul Huq Kamal were later included in the case as investigation found their involvement in the bribery.

Bashundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan alias Shah Alam and his two sons Shafiat Sobhan Sanvir and Sadaat Sobhan, and Tarique's personal secretary Mia Nur Uddin Apu are the other charge-sheeted accused.

The ACC said the eight were involved in receiving and giving the bribe to ensure that Sanvir did not face charges for killing Sabbir whose body was found outside a building in Bashundhara residential area on July 5, 2006.

Hospital staffs

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On the night of the incident, the 20-year-old victim was attending her husband who had been staying at the hospital for treatment since June 24.

In the case statement she said that she came out of the 2nd floor ward of the hospital to get drinking water on Tuesday night at around 9:00pm when she ran into Delwar and Mozammel in the hallway. Delwar is an old acquaintance of her husband as both Delwar and her husband are from the same area in Manikganj.

She alleged that Delwar and Mozammel at this stage duped her into going with them to the 1st floor for getting the drinking water. Delwar then took her inside a room and raped her against her will while Mozammel stood guard outside the entrance of the room.

S Asian nations miss

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he said, "On economic sides, these countries have good growth rates. Foreign exchange reserves are also good."

He said, "Promising things are in our hand. These are now at the stage of implementation."

Sharma, who became the Saarc secretary general on March 1 this year, described the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (Safat) and Saarc Development Fund as the successes of the forum of the eight countries in the region.

A few more projects of the development fund will be initiated before the next summit in Colombo, he added.

In his keynote address, Sharma said the priorities in the last summit were energy, water, food and climate change and work on these areas progressed on their own ways. "Colombo summit will be a time for our leaders to pronounce these issues," he said.

A Saarc Food Bank has already been established for food security of South Asian nations and four countries have already ratified it, one will ratify it soon and the rest are also expected to follow, he said, adding, "When ratification by all the countries is done, it will start functioning."

In terms of population, the Saarc is the biggest regional grouping and all the governments are heavily engaged in addressing problems of their nationalities, he said, adding that although these efforts are regional, they are implemented on national basis.

Sharma observed that the Saarc Secretariat requires more skilled and expert manpower to strengthen it.

Referring to the European Union (EU) and Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), he said today all refer to these regional groupings, but these also took time to fly.

Responding to a question, he said there is already visa exemption for people in a few categories for travelling the Saarc countries and the Saarc Secretariat is trying to increase the number of categories.

In his welcome address, BEI

Asia cup cricket

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Earlier, Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and youngster Rohit Sharma grafted half-centuries to guide India to their big total.

Dhoni (76) and Sharma (58) overcame a top-order slump to put on 112 runs from 139 balls for the fifth wicket after Rao Iftikhar picked up three wickets.

Dhoni was out in the penultimate over after scoring 76 from 96 balls with just four boundaries.

Pakistan, led by Misbahul Haq after Shoaib Malik collapsed with dehydration in a pre-match fitness test, lost the toss but responded well on a good pitch after a quickfire opening stand of 88 by Gautam Gambhir (35) and Virender Sehwag (49).

Iftikhar and Abdur Rauf (2-66) picked up four wickets for 41 runs with three coming in 10 balls to reduce the Indians to 129 for four.

Sharma reached his fourth fifty from 63 balls in the 40th over while Dhoni reached his 21st from 71 balls with only three fours.

Sharma hooked Iftikhar right down Rauf's throat in the 42nd over while in the next over Saeed Ajmal had Yousuf Pathan caught at wide mid-off for a duck.

29 killed

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Vavuniya and Welioya regions bordering the rebels' de facto state in the north, the military said.

The fighting in Vavuniya killed 16 rebels and one soldier, while in the nearby Welioya region 11 rebels and one soldier died, he said.

Rebel spokesman Rasiyah Iltanthyran could not immediately be reached for comment.

It was not possible to independently verify the military reports because journalists are banned from the northern jungles where much of the fighting takes place. Each side commonly exaggerates its enemy's casualties and downplays its own.

The government earlier vowed to crush the insurgents by the end of this year. However, the island's army chief, Lt Gen Sarath Fonseka, told reporters Monday that it may take another year to defeat the rebels.

The Tamil Tiger rebels have fought since 1983 to create an independent state for ethnic minority Tamils, who have been marginalised by successive governments controlled by ethnic Sinhalese. More than 70,000 people have been killed in the conflict.

Meanwhile, hundreds of Sri Lankan reporters and cameramen staged a protest outside President Mahinda Rajapakse's home Wednesday demanding an end to a wave of killings, abductions and assaults against journalists.

Media workers' associations peacefully demonstrated outside the main access to Rajapakse's Temple Trees residence while dozens of unarmed police stood behind yellow iron barricades. "We want the killings and assaults to end. We want the government to stop the culture of impunity," said media rights activist Sunanda Deshapriya.

Journalists covering the government's escalating war against Tamil Tiger rebels have come under increasing pressure in recent months.

The protest was sparked by the attack Monday on a British embassy political officer, Mahendra Ratnawera, and independent defence writer Nal Perera, while driving on a busy street in Colombo.

President Farooq Sobhan said the Saarc should give top priority on the issue of climate change as experts fear millions of people will lose shelters and adequate food production remains a challenge.

Emphasising the need for activating Safat, the former foreign secretary said the free trade agreement is now in place between India and Sri Lanka could also be replicated in case of other Saarc countries.

Saarc food security reserve is a crucial issue in the wake of food shortage and price hike, Sobhan said, adding that the Saarc could learn from the experiences of the EU and the ASEAN. He also suggested strengthening the Saarc Secretariat to make more initiatives.

He called for more cooperation on labour migration and energy cooperation among the Saarc nations, saying these are the issues that can truly help develop the region and face challenges ahead.

European Commission Head of Delegation Stefan Frowein, Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty, diplomats from home and abroad and development experts were present at the roundtable.

Iran

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the Islamic Republic's nuclear installations.

ABC News quoted an unnamed senior Pentagon official warning of an "increasing likelihood" that Israel will strike Iran's nuclear facilities before the end of the year. Such an attack could prompt Iran to retaliate, potentially disrupting oil shipments from the strategically vital Persian Gulf.

Nozari said such an attack would send oil prices further into uncharted territory.

"We don't think the wise people in the world even think about any action like that," he said. "Can you imagine ... what would be the result in the oil market?"

Oil prices hit a record high above \$143 this week.

But Nozari indicated Iran would not withhold its crude from the market even if attacked, although other officials have indicated otherwise.

"Iran has always been a reliable source of supply to the market, and Iran remains a (reliable) source of supply," he said.

He dismissed suggestions that the standoff over Iran's nuclear program has diminished Iran's oil and gas exports, despite US sanctions that prohibit American companies from doing business with Tehran and growing pressure from Washington on other countries to follow suit.

"We have increased our production in the past two years by 250,000 barrels a day and we have added to the production of our gas," he told the AP.

3 killed

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bus and ramming other vehicles including one car which was turned into a mangled wreck.

Several people opened fire at the man driving the earthmover and at least two policemen jumped on to vehicle, emptying several rounds into the driver and leaving him slumped over the wheel, according to AFP reporters.

The attack was the first in Jerusalem since a Palestinian gunman shot eight Jewish students in March and it was not immediately clear if it would have any impact on the faltering peace negotiations.

"We have four people dead so far, including the driver of the earthmover, and 45 wounded, three of them seriously," said Yeroham Mendola, a spokeswoman for the Magen David Adom emergency services.

Rosenfeld said the authorities had received no specific warnings about an impending attack but have since gone on heightened alert.

"The terrorist is an Arab who lives in east Jerusalem and is known by our services for his criminal activities," Rosenfeld told AFP.

Witnesses described scenes of mayhem.

"I saw the tractor ramming a car on Jaffa street, people started to shout and I came out the bank and I saw the truck. I shot the driver and the truck stopped," said Shmuel Aboukiya, a security guard at a nearby bank.

Another SC

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The High Court (HC) has also been experiencing a shortage of judges as no new judge has been appointed there for about four years.

Legal experts said the number of pending