

Rice stocking emerges

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market stable," said the food ministry official.

He said meeting the target has been the main concern of the government since rice import in private sector has remained stopped for the last three months, and India is also delaying to release the remaining 4 lakh tonnes of the 5 lakh tonnes of rice imported.

"We will find more pockets in Rajshahi division from where we may procure rice and paddy, the region from where the majority of the procurement comes," Food and Disaster Management Adviser AMM Shawkat Ali said on Monday.

Encouraged by the recent bumper boro harvest, the military backed government in March set a procurement target of 12 lakh tonnes of rice at a buying rate of Tk 28 per kilogram (kg), up from last year's buying rate of Tk 18, in an effort to build up a safe food bank.

They also targeted to procure 3 lakh tonnes of paddy from growers at the rate of Tk 18 a kg and 50,000 tonnes of wheat at the rate of Tk 26 a kg.

The government made agreements with 13,833 mills for supplying 9.94 lakh tonnes of food grains by the end of next month. According to the latest figures of the food ministry, 5.95 lakh tonnes of rice reached government warehouses since the procurement drive had begun on April 16.

But the drive slowed down as the millers, even after the agreements with the government, have been refusing to supply grains in the wake of further rise in prices following the latest hike in fuel oil prices on June 30.

"Millers are declining to sell rice to the government at the rate fixed by it, which is lower than market prices," said an official adding that the official procurement rate for a kilogram of rice is several taka lower than the latest market price.

He said, "Let alone meeting the target, procuring the agreed upon amount now seems a far cry."

According to the Rice Procurement and Control Order 2008, each miller seeking to procure paddy and sell rice must obtain a license from the authorities by applying for it on a prescribed form.

From now on the rice mill owners will also have to declare their stocks, and will face punishments including loss of licences if they fail to comply with the rules and refuse to supply rice to the government as per the agreements.

Licences of more than 1,200 rice mills across the country have already been cancelled for failing to supply rice and wheat according to the agreements with the government, and also for being unwilling to sign supply contracts.

"We will not take extreme measures against the millers," said Shawkat Ali. He identified rain,

inadequate power supply, and stockpiling by households and large farmers as the reasons behind the slide in government procurement.

Millers in the northern region said they are running out of funds and fear that many mills will shut down due to shortage of boro paddy in local markets.

"If supply to local markets doesn't improve, the government's rice procurement target is likely to fail," General Secretary of Uttar Banga Rice Mill Association Federation KM Layek Ali told The Daily Star on Monday.

About 60 percent of the mid size and small size millers are already out of paddy, he said adding that many millers incurred huge financial losses by providing the government with rice.

"The overall food procurement situation is not satisfying at all here in the region," said an owner of a large mill in Dinajpur. Despite the dire situation many millers however continued supplying food grains to the government according to the agreement, and they urged the government to give them incentives for minimising their losses. Otherwise, they said the millers will be forced to decline supplying soon.

The owner of Puly Rice Mill, Toyee Uddin of Ulat village under Kahlouz upazila in Bogra said he supplied 25 tonnes of rice out of the total 73 tonnes he had agreed to. He is now refusing to supply the rest on grounds of short supply of paddy in local markets.

Another rice mill owner, Rafiqul Islam of Kichak village under Shibganj upazila, so far supplied 45 tonnes of rice, but was unable to supply the remaining 45 tonnes due to the changed market situation.

"I will lose 2.50 taka a kg of rice if I supply the rest after purchasing paddy at a higher rate from the local market," Rafiqul told The Daily Star.

Food ministry officials said the government is not thinking of increasing the official rate for procurement, but will give incentives to rice millers instead for recovering from their losses.

The government's current rate for procuring rice is Tk 28 a kg while the current market price of a kg of coarse rice is Tk 33.

"Increasing the rate for procurement will have an additional adverse impact on the already heated market," a food ministry official told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the joint forces and mobile courts will be deployed to ensure meeting the government's food grain procurement target, if necessary.

The food adviser was hopeful of meeting the target saying the total stock will stand at 15 lakh tonnes once the procurement is concluded and the rice from India reaches the country.

Redwan, wife

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the charge sheet of the case before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court showing 35 people as prosecution witnesses.

The IO prayed for issuance of arrest warrant against Momtaj Ahmed and the order to attach her properties as she has been absconding since the case was filed.

In the charge sheet, the IO said Redwan, now a leader of Liberal Democratic Party, amassed Tk 2.95,45,500 through illegal means and concealed information about Tk 4,05,24,511 in his wealth information submitted earlier to the ACC.

On December 19, the ACC filed the case against the couple with Ramna Police Station.

In the case statement, the complainant said Redwan illegally accumulated Tk 2.31 crore and did not show property worth Tk 1.37 crore in his wealth statement.

Redwan submitted the wealth statement through jail authorities on August 14 as the ACC on August 7 issued a notice asking him to do so.

The first information report (FIR) of the case states that Redwan showed the price of his plot in Uttara, a four-storey building on 7.21 decimals of land in the capital and a two-storey building at Monihar in Comilla, lower than they actually are.

His concealed property includes two cars in his wife's name, a car in his own name, four shops in Chandina, Comilla in the name of his wife, son, two daughters and a daughter-in-law, and a Rajuk plot in the capital in his wife's name, the FIR adds.

The FIR also says that Redwan gave false information about Tk 2.2 crore of wealth. He said his son Moyeen Ahmed gave him Tk 2 crore and he borrowed Tk 20 lakh from his son in 1990.

Investigations revealed that Moyeen was only 13 then and obtaining that much money from such a young boy is incredible, the FIR adds.

Momtaz was included in the case in connection with abetting her husband in accumulating and

concealing the wealth.

CASE AGAINST ALAMGIR
Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rabbani allowed the ACC to interrogate Alamgir at the jail gate after the ACC submitted a petition in this regard before the court.

On April 29, the ACC filed the case against Alamgir with Mohammadpur Police Station in connection with appointing 17 people without qualification and experience to the post of statistician (investigation) at Bangladesh Statistics Bureau in 1998.

Alamgir was earlier sentenced to 13 years imprisonment for amassing wealth through illegal means and concealing wealth information to the ACC.

D8 chalks

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mula to implement D8 programmes and projects, assist in mobilising resources from governmental and non-governmental sectors," the Malaysian FM told reporters on the sidelines of the 11th session of the Council of Ministers' meeting.

He further said the roadmap will also broaden support for the D8 community, the private sector and the grouping's economic cooperation initiatives.

The roadmap from 2008-2013, the main thrust, will focus on D8 Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) and Rules of Origin, customs and visa, industrial and business cooperation.

The second phase, 2013-2018, is to achieve intra-trade target of \$517.5 billion or between 15 and 20 per cent of D8 global trade.

Among other objectives, the roadmap also spell out trade facilities, customs cooperation, capacity building, migrant workers, small- and medium-scale enterprises and information and communications technology.

Doc husband

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to have three abortions.

Neighbours and relatives told The Daily Star that Tozammel did not allow Nazma to open the windows of her house, use the land phone or keep any domestic help in the house. He forced her to live all alone by herself while he stayed out all day long.

Meanwhile, Mirpur police took Dr Tozammel and Humayun Kabir on a four-day remand yesterday.

Nazma's family reassessed their suspicion that Dr Tozammel Hossain killed Nazma.

Her mother, 70-year-old Asmarunnessa, demanded justice for her daughter yesterday as she tried to make sense of her daughter's tragic murder.

Nazma's brother Mehedi Hasan told The Daily Star that Tozammel had forced Nazma to have three abortions and this had broken Nazma's heart as she wanted to have children. This was the reason behind a major rift between the couple, he said.

Other family members said Tozammel had always physically beaten Nazma and misbehaved with them. Tozammel got married to Nazma concealing the fact that he was already married and had a child. He forced his first wife to leave by beating and torturing her too, they said.

Police recovered Nazma's body from the bathroom of her house. Her face had been burnt, legs fractured and tendons cut when the body was found.

Sources at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue said that the victim's head had been struck against some hard object, which caused her death.

Sub-inspector Golam Rabbani of Mirpur police station, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, told The Daily Star that neither man admitted guilty to the charge against them.

Police suspect that Nazma was killed following some terrible family feud.

3 muggers

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Suman Nath and Sharif were admitted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital at around 4:30pm.

A case was filed with Paharali Police Station in this connection.

World of poetry

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struggling every minute to stand the pain. Jali approached Suma's parents again on Tuesday and got furious on refusal. "You've kept me waiting for two years; I won't let you get away with this," the mother quoted the thug saying.

He demanded Tk 1 lakh in "compensation" and threatened the family with dire consequence for failure.

Suma's father Hossain Molla, a vegetable trader at Gabtoli in Dhaka, had no means to pay the sum. On his failure, Jali along with Faruq and Abu Kalam went to his house at 6:30pm with a pot of acid, he said in a complaint filed with Rupganj police on Saturday.

"Moments before they threw acid at me, I saw a pot-like thing in his (Jali's) hands," Suma said.

Suma's mother, who was cooking, rushed to her hearing her screams. "I saw smoke emitting from her body and pushed her into a nearby pond."

With 30 percent of her body including her face and arms burned, she was committed to DMCH the same night where she is still undergoing treatment.

None of the perpetrators has been arrested.

"They have fled immediately after filing of the case," Ashraf Islam, investigation officer of the incident, told The Daily Star last night.

HC asks ACC

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He said the court might hear the petition today, if the commission submits the papers.

Mohammad also said the court asked for the documents to scrutinise whether the commission's permission for filing the case against Khaleda was given following due process of law.

Detailed BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia filed the writ petition on Monday for quashing the case pending with the Special Judge's Court 9 set up at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises and also staying the case proceedings.

The ACC filed the case with Tejaogaon Police Station against Khaleda Zia and several others on December 9 last year on charges of abusing power to award a gas exploration and extraction deal to Canadian company Niko.

AL asks

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regarding parliamentary elections, its desired consensus with the parties will be at stake, he said.

CA proposes funds

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Agreement provisions would significantly boost the trade volume.

The CA stressed operationalisation of the customs agreement and implementing the agreements on simplifications of visa procedures for businessmen and MoU on air services cooperation.

He told the forum that Bangladesh has ratified the D8 visa agreement, which will facilitate business travels to Bangladesh from other member countries.

On the critical issue of climate change, the CA said D8 members should cooperate in regional and multilateral forums to uphold the sacrosanct principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

He said cooperation among the D8 members is a must to ensure that the developed countries make unilateral, meaningful and unconditional commitments to cut down their greenhouse gas emissions.

He said D8 should actively pursue sustainable development with special emphasis on adaptation and technology transfers. "Developed countries should provide us with adequate additional resources to address climate-change adaptation needs in addition to regular ODA. Bangladesh stands ready to offer its own experiences in adaptation techniques and practices."

On potential of international migration, the CA pointed out that migration through remittances and transfer of knowledge has proved to be a strong antidote to poverty.

However, he said, opportunities for legal migration remained limited because of various restrictive policies and practices in many destination countries.

He proposed taking concrete steps and going beyond the agreed visa regime to facilitate the movement of natural persons among the D8 member countries: Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia, Turkey, Nigeria and Egypt.

Turning to domestic political scenario, the CA said his government is now at the final stage of political reforms to make democracy meaningful for the people.

He brought to the notice of the summit leaders the significant measures taken by the present caretaker government to eradicate corruption, promote the rights of the people, establish the rule of law, and make the government, especially the judiciary, effective and accountable.

The CA further informed the D8 leaders that his government opened dialogue with political parties to forge a national consensus for good governance.

"Bangladesh's experience, we believe, can serve as an example for many developing countries facing the challenges of democracy and governance," he said.

Iranian president and Pakistani prime minister also made their respective countries statement before delivery of Fakhruddin's speech.

General in Hong Kong.

Countries with spare oil supply capacity and emerging economies that are driving up demand "are not under the G8 umbrella, he said.

Saudi Arabia last month agreed to increase its daily oil production, but most members of the OPEC oil cartel remain firmly against an output boost, blaming speculators and the fall in the dollar for the oil price surge.

One way the G8 could try to rein in oil prices would be through efforts to stabilise the US currency, but that would require higher US interest rates or market intervention, which both seem unlikely at the moment, Maguire said.

The summit statement made no mention of the weakness of the US currency, although US President George W. Bush told fellow G8 leaders that he was committed to "a strong dollar."

"The president of course reaffirmed his interest in a strong dollar and his commitment to a strong dollar," said Dan Price, Bush's assistant for international economic affairs.

The G8 issued a thinly veiled call on China to allow a stronger yuan, saying that it was vital for some emerging economies with large and growing current account surpluses to allow exchange rate flexibility.

The rich nations' club said it would resist trade protectionism and called for efforts to galvanise stalled global free trade talks.

They recognised that government-controlled sovereign wealth funds were "increasingly important participants in the world economy" and welcomed efforts by some to be more transparent.

The funds, seen as the new heavyweights in global finance, have stirred political fears in Western capitals after coming to the rescue of a number of big banks hit by huge losses from the US mortgage crisis.

Farmers' stocking: Zillur

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Farmers are not releasing the whole rice produce like they used to do. They were forced for distress sale earlier which is not the case this year," he added.

Terming it a new phenomenon and a positive sign, he said, "The farmers have become market players."

Solvent farmer is a new phenomenon, Zillur said, adding, "It was never there before. So, we could not say what would be the implications. It came as a new challenge."

Asked whether he agrees that farmers are not selling their whole produce fearing they might purchase rice at much higher cost later, Zillur said, "There's no issue of agreeing with it. The situation is unstable globally."

On such stocking's implications on the market, the adviser admitted that market is suffering from this.

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The prices used to come down for post-harvest distress sale and it is not happening this year. There is an implication on those who are totally dependent on purchase, Zillur said, stressing on the need of understanding the implication issue.

Asked whether he agrees with the finance adviser's recent statement on price spiral of essentials, he said, "We're living in an economic reality and market econ-

omy is a major aspect of it. It's the duty of the government to ensure that market economy operates properly and logically."

Claiming that the government is carrying out its duties by taking a number of steps, he said, "There is a matter of finding traditional and non-traditional ways to address this. As you've seen, the finance adviser has laid out some plans in his budget speech."

Brushing aside the allegation that the government is not serious to address the price spiral issue, he said different ministries are monitoring the situation.

As reporters pointed out that there is almost no outcome, he said steps and outcomes are not the same thing. "Many factors are involved for certain outcomes."

The government is trying to ensure some comfort for the people, he said, adding, "It has to be seen separately whether it's having impact on the market."

The government has initiated a number of steps to monitor the market. The commerce ministry has prepared a schedule for it.

"We've kept several agencies ready for it."

During the Ramadan, the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh will stock the most used items.

"Besides, we'll monitor the sale of the items."

Voters denied

FROM PAGE 16
ASM Shahjahan said the EC is not allowing people to know details of mayoral and councillor candidates, which violates a court verdict.

"We are seeking information about candidates, but the EC is refusing to provide it before July 14... what is their [the EC's] interest? Do they want to save somebody by hiding information? The EC's refusal is a clear violation of the right to information," said Badiul Alam Majumder.

Liakat Ali, editor of a local Bangla daily Sonali Sangbad, said people are being cheated as the EC is failing to protect the elections from criminals and corrupt people even after formulating stringent laws for electoral reforms.

"About 50 people collected nomination forms for the RCC mayor post but only 18 of them were submitted. Old political faces showed up even though participation of political-party affiliated people in the polls is not allowed," he said.

The speakers said electing honest and competent people would be very difficult as politically-affiliated candidates will use their influence in the election and afterwards.

Arun Bosu called upon people to unite and elect an honest and competent candidate.

"Sona Dighi was turned into a sewage line; drugs are destroying the city's youths... the people themselves are to choose a leader who can relieve them of these problems," he said.

The speakers said silence and inactivity of good people is more dangerous than corruption and crime. Citizens should unite against corrupt people and criminals and protect the country from them.

City, Municipality

FROM PAGE 1
municipality polls are non-partisan and candidates are not allowed to use their political affiliations, party names and portraits of leaders in election campaign.

Besides, there are some restrictions on using posters and writing on walls.

The electoral code of conduct took effect automatically with announcement of the polls scheduled on June 20.

However, the commission ignored the political parties' involvement in the nomination phase. It said it did so deliberately to help create an atmosphere for elections.

Once the deadline for withdrawing candidature is over on July 13, the ROs might be asked to convene a meeting and ask the candidates to comply with the code of conduct.

MAYORAL DEBATES
For the first time in its history, the EC will organise electoral debates to give the mayoral candidates an opportunity to speak about their plans and policies.

Voters will be allowed to participate in the debates and ask the runners questions on local issues.

The state-run television and radio stations will broadcast the events live from the city corporations, sources in the EC Secretariat said.

Of the four debates, the first one will be held in Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) on July 15.

Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda and two other election commissioners -- Muhammed Sohel Hussain and Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hussain -- are expected to attend the opening programme.

The debate in Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) is scheduled for July 21, Khulna City Corporation (KCC) July 26 and Barisal City Corporation (BCC) on July 30.

The number of mayoral candidates in SCC stands at 21, in RCC 18, in KCC 15 and in BCC 14.

700 tolas

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track down the robbers."

Police, however, said the robbers had looted only five per cent of the gold ornaments put on display at the shop.

Meanwhile, the shop owners of nine markets in the area kept their outlets shut since 3:00pm protesting the incident.

They demanded immediate recovery of the looted gold and arrest of the robbers.

Govt appeals

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Justice Mashuque Hossain Ahmed on Monday stayed for two months all proceedings of the Niko and barge-mounted power plant cases against Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, following the filing of two petitions by Hasina for quashing the cases filed by the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC).

The court also issued separate rules asking the government and the ACC to explain within four weeks why the cases should not be quashed.

Date-expired blood

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but that the Safe Blood Transfusion Act 2002 does not allow further power to mobile courts.

He said that neither banks hold government permits and were found to be collecting blood from professional donors, many of whom could be drug users.

"This kind of blood exposes a prospective receiver to the risk of such dangerous diseases as AIDS, Hepatitis-B and C viruses, malaria and syphilis as drug users often carry such diseases," said Dr Moutazuddin Bhuiyan, assistant director of DGHS who assisted the Rab mobile court, told The Daily Star. He added that use of date expired blood can cause anaphylactic shock in a patient, that could be fatal.

Major Saiful Islam Chowdhury said, "We decided to launch the drive after receiving information that several hundred such banks operate across the country."

He said that a similar drive was to be conducted on a clinic at Bangla Motor area but the owners had kept their premises shut on the day.

According to DGHS information, only 10 blood banks -- nine in the city and one outside the capital hold permits to operate as blood banks. In addition, all government hospitals act as blood banks.

The private blood banks in the city with valid permits are Lab Aid, Quantum Foundation, Kidney Foundation, United Hospital, Apollo Hospital, City Hospital, Green View Hospital, Square Hospital and Ad-din Hospital.

A blood bank is required to make a deposit of Tk 1 lakh to get a government licence, they also need to have at least one expert physician and two technicians in addition to other facilities to obtain the licence.

Asked why the DGHS has not taken any punitive action against blood banks raided, Moutazuddin Bhuiyan said the mobile court is empowered to check and monitor

Pet owners prefer McCain over Obama

AP, Washington

If the presidential election goes to the dogs, John McCain is looking like best in show.

From George Washington's foxhound "Drunkard" to George W. Bush's terriers "Barney" and "Miss Beazley," pets are a longtime presidential tradition for which the presumed Republican nominee seems well prepared, with more than a dozen.

The apparent Democratic nominee Barack Obama, on the other hand, doesn't have a pet at home.

The pet-owning public seems to have noticed the difference.

An AP-Yahoo! News poll found that pet owners favor McCain over Obama 42 percent to 37 percent, with dog owners particularly in McCain's corner.

"I think a person who owns a pet is a more compassionate person caring, giving, trustworthy. I like pet owners," said Janet Taylor of Plymouth, Mass.

4-month

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should be quashed.

Barrister Mahbubuddin Khokon, one of the counsels for the petitioners, told the court that the ACC did not follow due process of the law and rules while it was filing the cases against the petitioners. So, the trial proceedings of the cases became invalid.

Shafiq Alam, assistant director of the ACC, filed a case with Ramna Police Station against Khandker Mosharraf Hossain and his wife Bilkis Akter Hossain on charges of amassing illegal wealth worth Tk 12.51 crore and concealing information about Tk 3.11 crore. The ACC filed an extortion case against Aman Ullah Aman and his wife Sabera Aman with Gulshan Police Station on June 27, 2007.

The anti-corruption watchdog filed an extortion case against Sheikh Tayebur Rahman on November 7, 2007 with Khulna Police Station.

On August 19, 2007, the commission filed a case with Paltan Police Station against former BTRC chairman Taimur Alam Khandker for alleged corruption in distributing 200 CNG cars in 2002.

The ACC on July 17 last year filed a case with Kotwali Police Station in Rajshahi, accusing the RCC mayor of amassing illegal wealth worth over Tk 78 lakh and