

Food grain stock dips

Govt fails to achieve rice procurement target; private importers active

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is finding it hard to stock up on food grains because of their high price in local and international markets.

However, food import by the private sector is on the rise, as traders seek to maximise profit amid the government's procurement shortfall.

The government had a target to procure 12 lakh tonnes of boro rice at Tk 25 per kg from the local market between May 1 and August 31. But it achieved only 38 percent of the target.

To better the response from the suppliers, the government has offered an incentive of Tk 3 per kg, pushing the procurement price to Tk 28 a kg.

It has also taken steps to import food grains from the international market. But importers have been dilly-dallying to supply food grains as per the agreements with the government.

The food division has so far forfeited security deposits of three suppliers for failure to deliver. The suppliers had signed agreements with the government in the last fiscal year to import 1.60 lakh tonnes of wheat.

Coming to power in January 2009, the government announced it would build up a stock of 15 lakh tonnes of food grains, 5 lakh tonnes more than what is considered to be a safe stock.

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The Sultana Kamal Second Shitalakkhya Bridge in Demra was recently opened to public but influential people have already started encroaching on the river in the name sand business. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Sohel Taj back home

May get new assignment

HASAN JAHI TUSHER

Awami League lawmaker Tanjim Ahmad Sohel Taj, who resigned June last year as state minister for home, returned from the United States yesterday amid speculations that he might be appointed as state minister for another ministry.

Highly placed sources told The Daily Star a week ago that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was reconsidering giving Sohel Taj charge of a ministry as a state minister.

They said Sheikh Hasina's close aides in the country and the US had been trying to convince Sohel Taj for a new post in the cabinet since he had resigned from the home ministry six months after taking oath as its state minister.

They even proposed him the vacant joint general secretary's post in the 73-member Awami League central committee, the sources added.

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Tailbacks take toll on commuters

Trip time almost doubles on heavily congested Dhaka-Ctg highway

HELEMUL ALAM and NAJMUL ALAM NOBIN

It took less than six hours to Chittagong from Dhaka by bus a few years ago but in recent times it is around 10 hours and sometimes more due to worsening congestion.

Azadul Haque left for Dhaka from Chittagong around 10:30pm on a bus but the traffic was so bad on Dhaka Chittagong Highway that he reached Dhaka 14 hours later.

He had to fast without having sehri as the bus failed to reach a restaurant on the way within the time for sehri expired.

Delays like the one Azad faced are almost a regular phenomenon on the highway.

"I cannot reach Dhaka from Chittagong in

less than 10 hours and I consider myself lucky if I can reach in less than eight," said Julhas, who uses the highway often.

Only five years ago travelling between Dhaka and Chittagong took six hours now it takes around 10 hours or more due to congestion, said Khalilur Rahman, a driver of a luxury bus. He blamed too many vehicles using the narrow highway for the delays.

The annual traffic growth on the highway is eight percent, said an official of Roads and Highways Department.

Poor road conditions at different points and illegal occupation of the highway by land grabbers are worsening the situation, said

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RMG exporters get a boost

Govt taskforce decides 5pc incentive for penetrating new markets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will provide development incentive to the garment industry for three years for exporting clothes to new markets.

The incentive would be five percent on export earning in the first year, four percent in the second year and two percent in the third year.

The decision came at a meeting of the taskforce on making strategies for the country's export sector suffering for global economic recession. Finance Minister AMA Muhith chaired the meeting at his office at the secretariat.

The minister told reporters after the meeting that, "Garment manufacturers making exports to countries other than the USA, Canada and European Union will get the incentive".

For this, the government would create a new fund from the

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SPOT FIXING ICC suspends Pakistan cricket trio

REUTERS, London

Cricket's governing body vowed yesterday to do whatever necessary to root out cheats and preserve the integrity of the game after suspending three Pakistan players over match-fixing allegations.

"I would like to express my extreme disappointment and sadness at what has happened," International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive Haroon Lorgat told a news conference.

"We have been clear that we will not tolerate any sort of corruption in the sport and upholding the integrity of

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Trickery with launch tickets

Cabins reserved for VIPs; deck tickets costlier ahead of Eid

PANKAJ KARMAKAR

As the demand for launch tickets shoots up on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr, passengers fall prey to the trickery of launch operators and staff and are compelled to pay much higher fare to reach their destination.

About a million people leave the capital by passenger vessel to meet their near and dear ones, resulting in a sell out of tickets for all directions to the southern part of the country.

Tickets of designated passenger cabins of the launches have already been sold out. Even the launch crew who have sleeping arrangements on board have also sold out their accommodation for hefty amounts.

Ministers, political leaders, government, police and army officials, who enjoy quota privileges, have secured most of the tickets of the cabins, said the launch owners.

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Two Rab men wounded in gunfight with 'drug peddlers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two Rapid Action Battalion men and an alleged pusher were injured in a gunfight between the crime busters and "drug peddlers" at Malancha in Keraniganj on Thursday night.

The injured Rab members-sub-inspector Md Zaman and Constable Abdul Motaleb--were admitted to Mitford Hospital.

Rab-10 officials said they arrested the wounded pusher, Mohammad Ali, on the scene and handed him over to the Keraniganj Police Station after treatment at Mitford.

They also seized 50 bottles

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22 injured in separate fire incidents

UNB, Gazipur

Valuables of a steel factory were gutted while 22 workers were injured in separate fire incidents in Sreepur and Tongi upazilas yesterday.

Police and fire services sources said, a fire that started at about 9:30am at SKB Steel Factory at Boiragichala in Sreepur gutted its valuables and injured its two employees.

Habib and Faruque were injured while extinguishing the fire.

The cause of the blaze at the factory, which was kept closed yesterday, could not be known immediately.

On information, fire

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The Eid shopping frenzy kicks into higher gear yesterday on the last weekend ahead of Eid. The photo was taken in front of Gausia Market yesterday. PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

Stop pre-Eid extortion

Sahara asks law enforcers

UNB, Dhaka

Home Minister Sahara Khatun has asked police and other law enforcing agencies to maintain extortion free environment at city's markets and shopping malls.

The minister gave the directive while visiting several markets and shopping malls in the city yesterday.

She also called for checking other criminal activities in and around those places.

Talking to journalists, the minister said that there is no report of extortion at city's markets and shopping malls ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

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EVICION DRIVE 15 injured as hawkers clash with cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT


At least 15 people, including six policemen, were injured in clashes yesterday after law enforcers tried to evict hawkers from footpaths in the capital's Gulistan area.


Police arrested 12 hawkers from the scene.

Witnesses said law enforcers moved to evict makeshift shops on the footpath near Sergeant Ahad Police Box shortly after 3:00pm. A group of hawkers protested it and got involved in altercation with police.

They staged demonstrations and clashed with police at around 3:30pm. Law enforcers lobbed teargas canisters and charged baton on the hawkers,

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