

Food spend shoots up

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market in the coming months," Food Minister Abdur Razzaque told The Daily Star yesterday.

The food ministry has already sent a revised budget to the finance ministry, an official of the finance ministry said, seeking anonymity.

The government expenditure for buying rice and wheat will rise to Tk 10,367 crore in the revised budget from Tk 7,289 crore in the original budget of this fiscal year (2010-11), he mentioned.

According to the revised budget, import cost of food will soar 172 percent to Tk 7,049 crore from Tk 2,591 crore in the original budget, as it aims to double import of rice and wheat to 23.53 lakh tonnes including 12.86 lakh tonnes of rice.

At the international level, crop losses due to droughts and floods in major growing areas, and subsequent ban by producing countries has led to rise of commodity prices since the middle of 2010, creating concerns of another food price shock in many countries.

Locally, despite a rise in production of rice in the past two years, its prices continued to rise for more than one year amid speculations of crop losses, hoarding and lack of required quantity of food grains in government stock and increase in public procurement price in July 2010.

Over the last one year, prices of coarse rice surged 33 percent to Tk 35-37 per kg in the city market, according to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB).

Prices of flour soared 53 percent to Tk 33-36 a kg in the past one year, TCB data shows.

At the same time, prices of rice stand between \$530-\$550 per tonne on the international market, according to food ministry officials.

They attributed the rise in government expenditure for food procurement to increase in the volume of import and high prices on the world market.

In June, price of rice was \$430 per tonne on the global market.

Meanwhile, the government was able to buy half its targeted procurement of rice and paddy -- 12 lakh tonnes -- from the local market during the boro season last year. But in the immediate past aman season, it shelved its plan to buy 3 lakh tonnes of rice and later planned to go for the world market.

The shift in plans has resulted in a 34 percent slump in estimated expenditure to Tk 2,579 crore from Tk 3,924 crore in the original budget for domestic procurement.

The food minister said, "We hope international prices of rice will fall in the coming months after the harvests in Vietnam and Thailand."

According to FAO's price index, prices of wheat and

maize rose amid tightening supplies while those of rice fell slightly as the time coincides with the harvesting in major exporting countries.

To minimise the impact of high prices of staple on the poor, the government strengthened its intervention through various measures including open market sale (OMS) and fair price card.

"We have targeted providing rice to 1,000 poor families in every union through fair price card. We hope 40-45 lakh families will get this facility," said Razzaque.

From July last year to mid-January this year, the government distributed 6.76 lakh tonnes of food grains through various measures. As of January 13 this year, the government had a food grains stock of 8.13 lakh tonnes.

4 robbers

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Enterprise around 9:00pm.

Quoting locals, the OC also said the gang held owner of the enterprise Moniruzzaman, 50, and his staff hostage at gunpoint.

In the meantime, the security guard locked the office from outside.

On information, a number of locals came to the spot and caught the robbers. They started beating the five.

OC Shahin said police recovered a gun, a revolver and a knife from the possession of the robbers.

BDR carnage case

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The court also fixed that day for hearing on the bail petitions filed for 285 accused in the carnage cases and another 125 accused in the case filed for possessing explosives, arms and ammunition during the February 25-26 mutiny that killed 74 people including 57 army officers.

Speaking anonymously, a top official of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), which investigated the carnage case, said they have initial information about involvement of around 100 more BGB members.

Primary information suggests two to three of those were directly involved in the killings, the official added. "Now we'll verify those pieces of information. If anyone is found involved, he would be inducted in the chargesheet," he said.

Earlier on July 17, CID's Special Superintendent Abdul Kahar Akand after around 17 months of investigation pressed charges in the cases. Prosecutor Mosharraf Hossain Kajol yesterday told the court that further investigation should be carried out only against those whose names are coming out now.

Asked, he said all of them are members of BGB (formerly BDR) and are being tried in the mutiny cases. He also said all of them are already behind bars. "As the mutiny trial is going on, names of BGB members directly involved in killings, loot, arson and other offences are coming out," said a top BGB official who interrogated the accused.

As many as 801 of total 824 accused were hauled before the makeshift court on the playground of Dhaka Alia Madrasa amid tight security. Apart from the prosecution, several hundred defence lawyers gathered in the courtroom. Hours before the court started proceedings, prison authorities started carrying the accused to the courtroom in prison vans from Dhaka Central Jail.

Earlier on January 5, the trial began and the court took the charges into cognisance

Blast kills Afghan father and son

AFP, Kunduz, Afghanistan

A father and his young son were killed yesterday when a bomb blew up their car in Afghanistan, police said.

The incident near the northern city of Kunduz was the latest attack of the deadly Taliban insurgency that has gripped the country for the last nine years.

"A father and his 10 or 12-year-old son who were driving to the city were killed," deputy provincial police chief Abdul Rahman Aqtash told AFP.

against 824 accused. The judge yesterday took his seat at 10:25am and said he would begin the hearing on the charge framing against the accused.

Advocate Sanaullah Mia, counsel for Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, former BNP lawmaker and an accused in the case, sprang on his feet and complained that they have not yet received necessary case documents. Several other defence lawyers also echoed him.

He also alleged that they cannot talk freely in the court. "It seems a farcical trial is being held inside cantonment. Uniformed army members are sitting inside the courtroom," he alleged.

The defence requested the court to defer the date for hearing on charge framing for two months and ensure that they receive necessary documents.

In reply, the judge said he did not see any army personnel in the courtroom or his chamber.

He also asked two lawyers each from the prosecution and the defence to talk to him after the day's proceedings to remove all problems.

The judge said the law ministry has already taken steps to provide five photocopies to the court to copy around 1.6 crore pages of documents.

Chief Prosecutor of the case Advocate Anisul Haque argued against giving two months' time for next hearing.

As the prosecutor sought time for further investigation, the defence shouted "shame, shame", opposing the petition. They asked the court to fix a date to hear whether law permits further investigation into a case that is already under trial.

If some fresh names are found to be involved in the heinous offences, further investigation should be conducted to bring those guilty to book, Prosecutor Kajol argued.

After the arguments the court passed the order.

It's encephalitis

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Experts said the disease is quite common in Faridpur, Rajbari and Madaripur region where the government has surveillance programmes.

There is no specific treatment against it but early diagnosis can reduce death rate, they add.

A common symptom of the disease is high fever along with headache and vomiting.

"If someone has fever [in the affected area], they should immediately go to a doctor," advised Dr Subodh Kumar Kundu, who headed the IEDCR team.

One can get encephalitis in two ways -- from direct infection of the brain or from a previous infection that causes one's immune system to fail, experts say.

Direct infection can be

caused by bacteria, fungi and virus.

"It can result from certain viral infections passed between humans, or from contact with infected animals or insects," said virologist Prof Nazrul Islam, former vice-chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

Meanwhile, our Lalmonirhat correspondent reported four more deaths apparently caused by the disease in the northern district yesterday.

The dead are Zafar Ali, 40, of South Goddimari village; Abdul Karim, 23, of West Bejpur; Khairul Islam, 50, of Tongbhanga; and Aranyo Ghosh, 8, of Hatibandha upazila.

Panicked, many people have started leaving the area.

Dr Subodh of IEDCR said

he is worried about the situation in Lalmonirhat and urged the people to remain alert.

In Bangladesh, two types of encephalitis -- Japanese and Nipah -- are common.

Japanese encephalitis is caused by mosquito bite.

Nipah, which is mostly spread by bats, was first reported in the country in 2001. People should be careful about bats and avoid drinking date juice the bats love to drink.

Because, the doctor says, drinking the juice earlier licked by an infected bat from the tree can cause encephalitis.

Vaccine of Japanese encephalitis has been proven effective in many countries, but it is yet to be tested in Bangladesh, said Alamgir Hossain, virologist of IEDCR.

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	05 General Manager	Bachelor / Post Graduate in any discipline	15 to 20 years in (Cut to Pack)
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Production (Finishing)	07 Manager	Bachelor in any discipline	05 to 07 years in finishing
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	12 Manager	Bachelor / Post Graduate in any discipline	07 to 10 yrs
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