

Low-income group half-fed

FROM PAGE 12
Similarly, a kg of flour costs Tk 23 at the truck in contrast to Tk 30 elsewhere.

Behind Sultana in the queue was Sumana Begum, a housemaid in the Shewrapa area of the capital.

Her family's situation is even worse: after paying for rent and her son and mother-in-law's treatment, she does not have much left for food.

"We are going hungry," said Sumona, whose husband is a day labourer.

Like Sultana and Sumana, the low- and middle-income group are making do with the food price hike by reducing their intake of proteins.

Food prices have been on an upward trend all year. In August, food inflation rose to 5.16 percent, up eight basis points from a month earlier, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

In the last couple of weeks, the prices of sugar, flour, chicken, fish, cooking oil, spices and vegetables have gone up due to supply constraints amid recovering demand from the pandemic and soaring prices in the international commodity market.

Visiting the kitchen markets at Kawran Bazar, Mirpur-1, Shewrapara and Kazipara in the capital yesterday, the correspondents found that broiler chicken was selling for Tk 170 a kg, up from Tk 140 a fortnight ago.

The farm's chicken eggs were seen selling at Tk 115-120 a dozen, up from Tk 110-115 a dozen seven weeks earlier.

The average prices of fish price have also soared have increased by Tk 20-100 per kg, said Sumon, a fish trader in the Karwan Bazar.

The price of onion has been increased by at least Tk 30 per kg within a week. Yesterday, the essential cooking ingredient was selling at Tk 75 to Tk 85 per kg.

Also, the prices of most vegetables have gone up by Tk 5-10 per kg in the last one week.

The price of tomatoes has gone up from Tk 100 to Tk 120 per kg last week but now it is selling at Tk 150 to Tk 160 per kg.

The price of carrots has increased by at least Tk 10 in a week to Tk 150 while green chilli was selling at Tk 200 per kg.

"The vegetable prices usually remain high every October due to shortage of supply," said Ghulam Rahman, president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh.

But in the case of other products, including oil, sugar, flour, the prices in the local market have gone up much more than that in the international market.

"Our traders hike prices on the pretext of international market prices," he said.

Edge-of-space balloon trip

FROM PAGE 12
spaceport -- and trips are priced at \$50,000 per seat.

The company claims in its press release that "the World View space tourism experience is the most affordable, longest duration and most accessible space experience on Earth."

Based out of Tuscon, Arizona, and headed up since 2019 by former Insitu CEO Ryan Hartman, World View has ambitious, pan-global plans.

After an Arizona opening for its first spaceport at the Grand Canyon, its next targets are -- in order of projected opening dates -- the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, the Serengeti in Kenya, the Aurora Borealis in Norway, Amazonia in Brazil, the Giza Pyramids in Egypt and, finally, the Great Wall of China in Mongolia.

These are the locations World View is calling the "Seven Wonders of the World, Stratospheric Edition."

The idea is that flights will take off from these premium locations and lift eight passengers and two crew members up to 100,000 feet

altitude, about four times higher than a standard commercial airplane flight, and nearly 23 miles into the stratosphere.

They'll zoom on up there in a zero-pressure balloon and pressurized space capsule, which will then gently float in the atmosphere, allowing guests to experience the Earth's curvature and the awesome darkness of space.

Each trip on board the craft will last six to 12 hours, during which time guests can enjoy the inflight dining and bar and internet data connection, make use of the inflight concierge, check out the Earth-view cameras, star-view telescopes and individual viewing screens, or just chill on the fully reclining seats.

It's all part of what promises to be a five-day immersive experience during which participants will be offered trips out from the spaceports to explore the local wonders at ground level.

Hartman tells CNN that this might include "helicopter tours, hot-air balloon rides, high-dining experiences and many other excursions."

City sees 2nd metro test run

FROM PAGE 12
in December next year.

At least, the service will be available between Uttara and Agargaon, a distance of 11.73km, by the end of next year, he said.

The Uttara-Agargaon section is part of the 20.10km metro route till Motijheel. The Mass Rapid Transit Line-6 or MRT-6, the country's first metro rail, is being built at a cost of Tk 21,985 crore.

Five of the 24 trains to be used in the service have reached Dhaka from Japan while two are at the Mongla port. The rest will reach the depot gradually.

Testing of the trains inside the depot started on May 11 this year.

The overall performance tests may take six months and the integrity tests may continue for another three months, Quader said on August 29.

After that, five months of trial runs without passengers will be carried out before starting the commercial

services, he added.

The original implementation period of the fast-track project was from July 2012 to June 2024.

Prime Minister Sheik Hasina inaugurated the physical work in June 2016.

She later directed the authorities to make the metro services on Uttara-Agargaon route operational by 2019, and Agargaon-Motijheel by 2020.

Failing to meet the deadline, the authorities in May 2019 said the services would be launched on December 16 this year to coincide with the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence. But construction work lost pace amid the pandemic, forcing the authorities to extend the deadline again, officials said.

As of August, this year, the project made 69.43 percent overall progress, with the first phase Uttara-Agargaon witnessing 88.58 percent and second phase -- Agargaon-Motijheel -- seeing 67.91 percent progress.

Taiwan 'reunification'

FROM PAGE 1
"The complete reunification of our country will be and can be realised," Xi said.

He also warned against foreign interference in Taiwan after a Pentagon official confirmed US special operations forces have been quietly training Taiwanese troops for months.

"The Taiwan issue is purely China's internal affair and does not allow any external interference," he said.

"Nobody should underestimate the Chinese people's firm resolution, staunch will and formidable capacity to defend their national sovereignty and territorial integrity," he said.

Beijing has ramped up pressure on Taipei since the 2016 election of President Tsai Ing-wen, who views the island as "already independent".

"Taiwan independence is the biggest obstacle to the reunification of the motherland and a serious hidden danger," Xi warned. "Those who forget their origins, betray the motherland, or split the country never meet a good end, and will inevitably be spurned by the people and put on trial by history."

Tsai is scheduled to speak today at an event commemorating the 1911 revolution, one of the few events that unite China and Taiwan.

Taiwan's defence minister said Wednesday that military tensions with China were at their highest in four decades, after around 150 Chinese warplanes -- a record number -- made incursions into Taiwan's air defence zone in recent days.

Xi's comments come after Britain

last week sent a warship through the Taiwan Strait, challenging Beijing's claim to the sensitive waterway, and a French delegation visited Taiwan despite warnings from China.

On Friday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian rebuked comments made by French delegation member Alain Richard, who referred to Taiwan as a "country" during a speech on Thursday.

Zhao said Richard, a former French defence minister, made the remarks "out of self-interest to undermine relations between China and France", adding that his use of the term "country" had "blatantly violated" international practice."

Xi's yesterday's speech struck a slightly softer tone than in July, his last major speech mentioning Taiwan, in which he vowed to "smash" any attempts at formal independence. In 2019, he directly threatened to use force to bring the island under Beijing's control.

Still, the speech was poorly received in Taiwan.

The presidential office said they were a sovereign independent country, not part of the People's Republic of China, and had clearly rejected China's offer of "one country, two systems" to rule the island.

"The nation's future rests in the hands of Taiwan's people," the office said.

In a separate statement, Taiwan's China-policy making Mainland Affairs Council called on Beijing to "abandon its provocative steps of intrusion, harassment and destruction" and return to talks.



Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau greets the Rahimi family (Ayat, Arezoo, Hawa, Obaidullah) who recently resettled in Ottawa from Afghanistan, in Ottawa, Canada, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

High-level US delegation meets Taliban

FROM PAGE 12
own actions. They need to establish a sustained track record," the official said.

The United States' two decades-long occupation of Afghanistan culminated in a hastily organized airlift in August which saw more than 124,000 civilians including Americans, Afghans and others being evacuated as the Taliban took over. But thousands of other US-allied Afghans at risk of Taliban persecution were left behind.

Washington and other Western countries are grappling with difficult choices as a severe humanitarian crisis looms large over Afghanistan. They are trying to formulate how to engage with the Taliban without granting it the legitimacy it seeks while ensuring humanitarian aid flows into the country.

Many Afghans have started selling their possessions to pay for ever-scarcer food.

The departure of US-led forces and many international donors robbed

the country of grants that financed 75 percent of public spending, according to the World Bank.

While there was an improvement for humanitarian actors get access to some areas that they haven't been in a decade, problems still persisted, the US official said, adding that the US delegation would press Taliban to improve.

"Right now, we are facing some real access issues....There are a lot of challenges in ensuring that female aid workers are provided unimpeded access to all areas," the official said and added that Washington needed to see an improvement by the Taliban on this front "if we are to contemplate even more robust humanitarian assistance."

PRESSURE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

While the Taliban has promised to be more inclusive than when it led the country from 1996 to 2001, the United States has repeatedly said it will judge the new Taliban government based on its deeds not its words.

The Taliban drew from its inner

high echelons to fill top posts in Afghanistan's new provisional government announced last month, including an associate of the Islamist militant group's founder as premier and a wanted man on a US terrorism list as interior minister. There were no outsiders and no women in the cabinet.

The European Union foreign policy chief said on Sunday its behavior up to now was "not very encouraging."

"We will certainly press the Taliban to respect the rights of all Afghans including women and girls and to form an inclusive government with broad support," the US official said.

He added that there were discrepancies between the Taliban's promises of continued safe passage and implementation.

"As a practical matter, their implementation of their commitments have been uneven. It is true that sometimes we receive assurances from certain levels but then follow through on those assurances has truly been uneven," the official said.

Chunnu made secy gen of JP

FROM PAGE 12
general of JP fell vacant following the demise of Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu on October 2.

Talking to The Daily Star, Chunnu yesterday said his first task would be to strengthen the main opposition party from central to the root level.

"My first priority will be to strengthen the party up to grass root level. Taking all leaders and activists of the party, I will start working to achieve this target," he said in his primary reaction.

Chunnu, a veteran freedom fighter, also a five-term MP of Kishorganj-3, is known in and out of parliament for his bold statements on different public-interest issues.

In the 2014 parliamentary elections, Chunnu was one of the key leaders of JP who had played a significant role to bring JP into the election, going against the party chairman's decision to boycott it.

From November 21, 2013, to January 12, 2014, he served as the Minister of State for Youth and Sports in the all-party government during the election.

On January 12, 2014, he was sworn in as the Minister of State for Labor and Employment in the Awami League-led government, according to the government website.

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different ministers in parliament for their failure to serve people.

He is also vocal in parliament against corruption and irregularities of different ministries including the health ministry.

Born in 1954 in Kishorganj, Chunnu started his service life as an assistant judge. In 1986, he quit the government job and entered in law profession and politics.

Rashidul Hasan Mujibul Haque Chunnu, a co-chairman and lawmaker of Jatiya Party yesterday was made the secretary general of the party ending the weeklong division and tension in the main opposition in parliament.

Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader appointed him in this post exercising his power in line with the party's charter.

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Chunnu who is currently chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on labour ministry said

KSA DRONE ATTACK

3 Bangladeshis among 10 hurt

AFP, Riyadh

Ten people, including three Bangladeshis, were wounded in a drone attack on a civilian airport in the Saudi city of Jeddah that was blamed on Yemen's Iran-backed Huthi rebels, official media said yesterday.

The Saudi-led coalition fighting alongside the Yemeni government, quoted by the Saudi news agency SPA, said travellers and airport employees were among those injured in Friday's attack, updating an earlier toll of five.

Six Saudis, three Bangladeshi nationals and one Sudanese were injured in the attack, SPA said, citing a coalition spokesman.

The "Iran-backed Huthi militia" was behind the attack "using a bomb-laden drone, which resulted in (10) injuries among civilian travellers and airport staff", coalition spokesman Turki al-Malki was quoted as saying.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility by the Houthis.

SPA said the attack caused "minor material damage and some broken glass fronts" at King Abdullah Airport in Jazan, about 60 kilometres from the Yemeni border.

The Shia Huthis have been stepping up attacks on Saudi Arabia, which has escalated air strikes on rebel forces closing in on Marib, the last government-held stronghold in northern Yemen.

Pope's appeal

FROM PAGE 12
raided occupation army position in Bhotemari and killed 10 enemy soldiers.

In the Jashore-Khulna-Kushtia sector, Mukti Bahini killed 7 occupation soldiers in Ghugri while they ambushed enemy troops patrol. In this action, one of the freedom fighters was wounded. On the same day, Mukti Bahini raided occupation army position at Madankati School of Khulna district killing four and injuring seven enemy soldiers.

In the Mymensingh-Sylhet-Moulvibazar sector, Mukti Bahini raided Pakistani troops' position in Kulaura killing five enemy soldiers. During this action, two Razakars surrendered to the freedom fighters with their rifles. On the same day, one enemy bus was blown up due to mine explosion in Pagla area killing one enemy soldier. Mukti Bahini also raided and destroyed a launch between Joykalas and Deraï on the same day. In another operation, Mukti Bahini raided occupation Army position in Chargram and killed two enemy soldiers.

UNICEF TO SEND BLANKETS FOR EVACUEES

The Unicef was planning to send about three million blankets for Bangladesh refugees, informed Henry Labouisse, executive director of the Unicef. He added that it was distressing to see many children suffering from malnutrition. Something must be done to provide them with proper food, he urged.

Labouisse further informed that the Unicef had already sent protein food for the children, hospital equipment and medical supplies in addition to shelter materials and other goods. About \$22 million were given to the Unicef to undertake "one of the biggest operations" for the refugees.

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Victim valiant

FROM PAGE 12
with gang-rape.

"Even before she was gang-raped, she was taken to the middle of a lake and raped on a boat."

After the incident, she escaped from her home and took refuge at her sister's house. Although local influential people knew about the incident, nobody took any steps to get justice for her, he added.

The former president of the Noakhali Bar Association lamented that there was an effort to change the system only when blood was shed -- this was not a constant process.

Khushi Kabir, coordinator, Nijera Kori, said that legal struggles were not to impact change if there is no proper social resistance against cases of rape.

"If the witnesses feel threatened by the society then the witnesses will step back," she said.

"If Shahoshika had not shown the courage to fight back, nobody would have been able to come to this point. The kind of role played by this woman who is disadvantaged from all sides, and the way she had undergone and experienced everything that has happened to her, shows the individual sense of resilience and dissent that she has," said Kabir.

Taslima Akhter, president of Garments Sramik Samhati Andolon, pointed out that Shahoshika's appeals had ignited the fire of protest.

"Now she needs to move on with her life. She needs to learn an income-generation activity and stand on her own two feet," she said.

The speakers sought the same level of promptness from the state in all cases of rape.

AFP, Tripoli

Guards shoot dead six migrants at Libya detention centre: IOM

Guards shot dead six migrants at an overcrowded Tripoli detention facility on Friday, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said, the latest violence against migrants following mass arrests in recent days.

"Shooting broke out and six migrants were killed in total. They were shot by the guards," the UN agency's Libya chief Federico Soda told AFP.

"We don't know what triggered the incident today but it is related to overcrowding and the terrible, very tense situation" at the Al-Mabani facility in the capital, he said.

He added that at least 20 other migrants were wounded and that many more had escaped in the chaos.