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FOOD PRICES

## Not coming down soon



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The shroud of pandemic gloom is finally lifting after a solid year and a half. But for ordinary citizens, that is bringing no solace with the prices of everyday essentials spiralling -- beyond their means.

And this run of bad luck would not be ending anytime soon if Commerce Secretary Tapan Kanti Ghosh's comments to reporters are anything to go by after an emergency meeting yesterday with traders on the current stock, the supply and price situation of sugar, edible oil, onion and lentil.

Take the price of onion, a key cooking ingredient, which, like clockwork, seems to see a price spiral every year.

This year's turn of price spiral is taking place now, and Ghosh said the high price will continue over the next one month until the harvesting of local variety of onion.

The onion prices have gone up in Bangladesh because of rainfall in India, he said.

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Holding umbrellas and grocery bags over their head, people wait in long queues amid sweltering heat in front of a truck of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) to buy daily essentials at subsidised prices. With prices of the essentials soaring in the market, the line of buyers in front of TCB trucks is getting longer by the day. The photo was taken near the Secretariat in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



## Hasina seeks Russia's help in building 2nd nuke plant

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday sought continued support from Russia for building another nuclear power plant in Bangladesh's southern region.

"Once the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant is completed, we'll go for setting up another one in the southern region of the country. We need continued support from Russia in this regard," she said.

The premier said this when the director general of Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation, Alexey Likhachev, met her at the Gono Bhaban.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim

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## AIR TICKETING FRAUD Firm swindles Tk 50cr from customers

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Travel agent Musa Mia Sagar bought 100 Dhaka-Dubai air tickets for Tk 40.14 lakh from airline ticketing company 24tk.com at a discount between March 3 and April 24.

In May, when expats who bought some of those tickets from Unique Air Travel International, the travel agency Musa works for, they found that the tickets were no longer valid.

When the expats failed to board the flights, they put pressure on Musa, the travel agent who bought the tickets from 24tk.com. Musa later found out that the company had fled with their money and earlier this month, filed a case against six people, including the owners and staffers of 24tk.com, with Uttara West Police Station.

The Criminal Investigation Department of police found that the e-ticketing agency 24tk has swindled small agencies and customers out of Tk 50 crore, Kamrul Ahsan, additional deputy inspector general of CID, told a press briefing at the CID headquarters in Malibagh yesterday.

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## BUREAUCRATS take the most

DIP officials denied top positions at passport and visa wings in missions abroad but their expertise being used

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARYA and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Around eight years ago, the government established passport and visa wings at different Bangladesh missions to provide better services to expatriates and visitors.

A total of 73 posts were created for 19 missions -- three to five posts for each wing -- to be filled up by officials and staffers of the Department of Immigration and Passports (DIP), as they have the expertise in the field.

Since the wings went into operation in 2015, not a single DIP official has been appointed as first secretary, the top among the positions, till date. Instead, senior assistant secretaries bagged the posts.

Of the remaining posts, only 40 percent were filled by DIP staffers, according to sources at the Department.

Interestingly, the ministry officials have to undergo training by none other than DIP personnel before being assigned to the wings, the sources told

this newspaper.

DIP officials say the practice has been in place as the home ministry, under which the department functions, deviated from a section of the proposal that deals with the appointment, although it was approved by the prime minister.

This shift is not only depriving the DIP professionals but also denying the Bangladeshi nationals living in different countries and visitors from across the world better and quality services, they allege.

Disappointed, some DIP officials further said passport enrolment is a technical job, and the missions could offer better services with right people in those positions.

"They do not have the required expertise, and yet they want to secure these posts. But we are the ones who provide the senior assistant secretaries and home ministry staffers a month-long training on technical issues of passport and visa processing," a high official of DIP told The Daily Star, requesting anonymity.

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RESEARCH ON LABOUR MARKET

## Trio wins Nobel Economics Prize



AFP, Stockholm

Three US-based academics yesterday won the Nobel Economics Prize for research on the labour market using "natural experiments", or observational studies, that have revolutionised empirical research in the field, the jury said.

Canadian-American David Card, Israeli-American Joshua Angrist and Dutch-American Guido Imbens shared the prize for providing "new insights about the labour market" and showing "what conclusions about cause and effect can be drawn from natural experiments," the Nobel committee said in a statement.

The Economics Prize wrapped up a male-dominated 2021 Nobel season which saw a total of 12 men win prizes and only one woman.

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## SINOPHARM, SINOVAC WHO experts recommend third dose for over-60s

AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organization's vaccine advisers yesterday said over-60s who have been fully immunised with China's Sinovac and Sinopharm vaccine should be offered an additional third Covid-19 vaccine dose.

The UN health agency's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunisation (SAGE) also recommended people with weaker immune systems should be offered an additional dose of all authorised Covid-19 vaccines.

The experts stressed they were not recommending an additional so-called booster dose for the population at large.

Several Covid-19 vaccines have been

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**মজবুত বিশ্বাসে নিরাপত্তার আশ্বাস**

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