



SOYBEAN OIL PRICE

Slipping out of reach

MD ASADUZ ZAMAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

A crisis of edible oil, particularly soybean oil, has hit the domestic markets amid retailers and wholesalers stocking up and refiners slowing down delivery, as prices of essential commodities keep climbing in the international market.

Over the last several days, many consumers have returned from stores without being able to buy the essential ingredient as retailers have had their shelves empty.

Even with oil canisters available, consumers are told that those are not for sale. Wholesale stores are seeing similar scenes as traders are out to make a quick buck.

Customers are being compelled to pay higher than the government fixed prices.

Low-income customers are suffering the most.

Residents of Bhasantek and Damalkote slums in the capital claim that loose edible oil has been scarce for low-income groups.

Shafiqul Islam, a scavenger who earns an average of Tk 200 daily to feed his five-member family, said he had to buy loose palm oil for his family as soybean oil was unavailable.

"If I want to buy half a litre of soybean oil, I will have to spend half of my daily income and compromise on other essentials."

Yesterday, loose soybean oil was barely available in Dhaka's kitchen markets, while whatever was available sold for Tk 170 per litre, according

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"I used to buy a litre of soybean oil every week. Now I can only buy one-third of that ... I don't know whom to complain to ... Nobody seems to care about us." -- Md Milon, a 72-year-old fruit trader in Dhaka.



Ukrainian troops assist a wounded person as they evacuate the city of Irpin, northwest of Kyiv, during heavy shelling and bombing, yesterday, 10 days after Russia launched a military invasion on Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

9 YEARS OF TAQI MURDER

A charge sheet taking forever

SHARIFUL ISLAM and SANAD SAHA

Almost a year after the brutal murder of Tanwir Muhammad Taqi, the draft of a Rab probe report got leaked in the media, revealing the involvement of 11 people, including Ajmeri Osman, in the killing.

Ajmeri is the son of late Jatiya Party lawmaker Nasim Osman and nephew of ruling Awami League MP Shamim Osman.

According to the probe findings, Ajmeri not only masterminded the murder of the bright teenage boy in Narayanganj, but also directly took part in it.

At his directives, his accomplices followed Taqi and forcefully took him to his "torture centre" at Winner Fashion on Allama Iqbal Road on March 6, 2013.

Later that night, Ajmeri and his cohorts beat and strangled the seventeen-year-old boy to death. His body was then put into a sack and taken to Charargop area in Ajmeri's car.

From there, the killers took the body to the Kumudini Jora Khal in a boat and dumped it in the Shitalakkhya sometime between 1:00am and 1:30am on March 7.

Taqi's body was recovered from the river the next day, according to the findings, reported by various media outlets.

Also, a day before Taqi's first death anniversary, Col Ziaul Ahsan, the then additional director general of Rab, claimed they had cracked the murder mystery.

He told the media they had evidence on the involvement of 11 people, including Ajmeri. He also insisted the charge sheet in the case would be submitted any day.

That day, however, has yet to come, even after eight long years, lingering Taqi's parent's agonising wait for justice and highlighting the authorities' unwillingness to end it.

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Sailors on their way home

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The 28 Bangladeshi crew members, rescued from a ship that was attacked at a Ukrainian port, were being brought back home.

"They will be brought back at the earliest," Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told reporters at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Last night, an official of the Bangladesh embassy in Romania told The Daily Star that the Bangladeshis were evacuated from Ukraine yesterday, and they were scheduled to reach Romania today.

The Banglar Samridhi, owned by Bangladesh Shipping Corporation, came under attack on March 2 night. Third engineer Hadisur Rahman, one of the 29 crewmen, was killed in the attack.

The ship had been anchored in Ukraine's Port Olvia since February 23. Russia has regretted the death but said the Russian side was not behind the attack. However, it said it would determine the circumstances and let Bangladesh know.

On Thursday, the 28 crewmembers and the body of Hadisur were transferred to a safe place in Ukraine. They were initially supposed to be transferred to Poland, but the authorities later decided to take them to Romania and then to Bangladesh.

Hadisur's body, kept in a refrigerator in Ukraine, will be sent to Bangladesh at a convenient time later, said an official of the Bangladesh embassy in Poland.

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Russia announces, violates ceasefire

Kyiv delays evacuations from key port city accusing Moscow of continuing shelling; Putin warns against no-fly zone

AFP, Kyiv

The Ukrainian port city of Mariupol postponed a planned evacuation of residents yesterday, blaming Russian forces for breaking their temporary ceasefire to allow civilians to flee one of the war's fiercest battles.

Russia has laid siege to the strategic city, which proudly resisted Moscow-backed rebels during a 2014 conflict, cutting off electricity, food and water in the dead of winter.

"The Russian side does not adhere to the ceasefire and has continued shelling both Mariupol itself and its environs, and for security reasons, the evacuation of the civilian population has been postponed," city officials said in a social media post.

Negotiations were underway "to establish a ceasefire and ensure a safe humanitarian corridor", Mariupol authorities added.

An evacuation had been seen as a prelude to a final assault that, if successful, would see the Russian army push north from occupied Crimea and link up with their forces from the east and take control of Ukraine's coast on the



Sea of Azov.

After Russia's defence ministry declared the ceasefire, officials announced that the port city's 450,000-strong population could begin to leave by bus and private cars.

The siege came as more Russian forces inched closer to the capital Kyiv, encountering stiff resistance in the western suburbs and the northern town of Chernihiv. Dozens of civilians have been killed in shelling, missile attacks and air raids, and now those remaining live among the town's ruins and in craters.

AFP reporters who visited the

town yesterday saw scenes of devastation -- despite Moscow's insistence it is not targeting civilian areas.

Fears are rising in Kyiv that the capital will suffer the same fate once Russian missile artillery is deployed within range.

Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov alleged Russia had changed tactics after encountering tough resistance.

Ukraine, he said, had defeated Russia's plan to quickly storm major cities and overthrow President Volodymyr Zelensky's government, forcing Moscow to

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