



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

FOOLHARDY ... Even though a footbridge is nearby, a young man jumps over the guardrail of the road divider near New Market on Mirpur Road in the capital yesterday.

HISTORIC MUJIBNAGAR DAY

No ordinary guard of honour



MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Amid threats of airstrikes, a turning point in the history of an independent nation was about to unfold and the stage was almost set for a defining moment in Bangladesh's Liberation War.

Everything necessary – the makeshift dais, the flag

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Russia hits Kyiv, Lviv

Presses offensive in ruins of Mariupol, warns US of 'unpredictable consequences' of Ukraine military aid

AGENCIES

Russian air raids and missile strikes hit Ukraine's capital Kyiv and other major cities yesterday as Moscow launched more long-range attacks following the sinking of its Black Sea Fleet's flagship.

In the besieged port of Mariupol, scene of the war's heaviest fighting and worst humanitarian catastrophe, Russian troops pressed their advances, hoping to make up for their failure to capture Kyiv by seizing their first big prize of the war.

"The situation is very difficult" in Mariupol, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy told the Ukrainska Pravda news portal. "Our soldiers are blocked, the wounded are blocked. There is a humanitarian crisis... Nevertheless, the guys are defending themselves."

"The elimination of our troops, of our men (in Mariupol) will put an end to any negotiations" between Ukraine and Russia, Zelensky said in the interview.

Moscow said its warplanes had struck a tank repair factory in Kyiv. An explosion was heard and smoke seen in the southeastern Darnytskyi

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ILIAS MISSING 10yrs gone, yet no trace



ASHUTOSH SARKAR

"We, the family members of the victims of enforced disappearance, have been leading a miserable life. We want our loved ones to be returned soon for the sake of the families and also to identify the perpetrators

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EDIBLE OIL PRICES Even record imports fail to arrest hike

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Despite record imports of soybean oil in the first quarter, consumers are having to pay an additional Tk 36-38 for every litre of non-bottled soybean oil over the price set by the government.

Each litre of non-bottled palm oil also costs Tk 21 more than the price fixed by the government.

From January to March, businesses imported 10.22 lakh tonnes of edible oils, which is nine percent more than the volume imported during the same period last year, according to data from the National Board of Revenue.

Despite this, wholesalers and retailers claim that supply shortages were driving the prices up.

Market insiders say oil refinery owners, dealers and brokers were creating the artificial crises.

At the end of March, the government fixed the wholesale price of non-bottled soybean oil at Tk 134 a litre and Tk 136 a litre at retail.

But in Khatunganj, arguably the largest wholesale market in the country, the wholesale price yesterday was Tk 164 and retail Tk 174.

Traders said the price of non-bottled soybean oil increased by at least Tk 8-10 over the last week. The price of bottled oil has not increased but there was a crisis of 5-litre and 3-litre bottles.

Contacted, SM Nazar Hossain, president of the Chattogram chapter of the Consumers' Association Bangladesh, blamed poor market and refinery monitoring for the situation. "The government's duty waiver on edible oil is not benefiting the consumers."

The government on March 10 waived 15 percent VAT on oil production and 5 percent VAT on retail until 30 June to cushion the blow of price hike in international market. Market insiders say soybean oil was trading at \$1800-\$1950 a tonne, up from \$1300-\$1400 between January and March.

Nowshad Ahmed, a wholesaler, said a few brokers and traders in Khatunganj were hoarding edible oils. "As a result, we are spending more to buy the oil, which ultimately puts the burden on consumers," he said.

Tariq Ahmed, senior director at TK Group of Industries, a major importer, gave a different explanation. "Many wholesalers are not buying enough at once as some wholesalers are being fined for hoarding."

According to the NBR, over 6.60 lakh tonnes of palm oil and 3.62 lakh tonnes of soybean oil worth \$135.11 crore have been imported through the Chattogram and Mongla ports in the first quarter.

The average import cost of palm oil is about \$1,320 per tonne and soybean oil \$1,405 per tonne, the data said.

Bangladesh imported 6.47 lakh tonnes of palm oil and 2.98 lakh tonnes of soybean oil worth \$89.94 crore in the same period last year.

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Learning Bangla made easy

App developed by Bangladeshi-Canadian gaining momentum among immigrants worldwide

TAMANNA KHAN

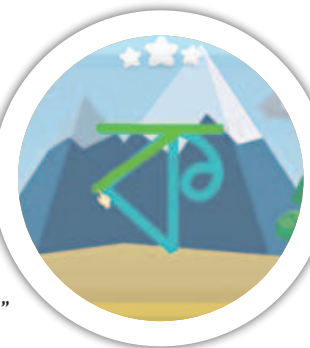
An amusing incident unfolded on March 30 at Farhana Rajib's home in Minneapolis, US. Her mother-in-law Shawkat Ara Begum received a note from her 12-year-old granddaughter Ella Rajib. Handwritten in Bangla, the note read: "Dida darun boka" (Grandma is very silly).

Instead of being upset, Shawkat Ara gave her granddaughter a big hug, said Farhana.

She said her 74-year-old mother-in-law was surprised because her granddaughter, born and brought up in the US, could hardly speak Bangla, let alone read and write in the language. But within a week of using Banglaskool, Ella learned to write a full sentence in her mother language.

Banglaskool, an app which aims to teach Bangla to children of Bangalee immigrants, was launched in Apple's App Store in February and on Google Play store in March. So far downloaded to more than 1,200 devices,

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Burned cars are seen outside a destroyed building following Russian shelling in Kharkiv, Ukraine, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Rejoinder, our reply

Dhaka Tannery Industrial Estate Wastage Treatment Plant Company Ltd has sent a rejoinder to a report run by The Daily Star on January 12 under the headline "Buriganga suffering, Dhaleshwari worse off".

The rejoinder sent on March 20 claimed that the report contained many incorrect and misleading information which tarnished the company's image at home and abroad. It said the information of releasing 15,000 m3 effluent into the Dhaleshwari was misleading and it harmed the leather sector and the country's dignity.

"After completing some pre-treatment inside the tannery, effluents are sent directly to the CETP through conveyance pipelines for treatment. There is no way to discharge untreated effluents into the river. Overflow of incoming effluent occurred to some

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