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Using expats to smuggle gold
40kg gold seized at Dhaka airport in a month



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Al-Jazeera journo's killing
Palestinians reject joint probe with Israel



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Messi top-earning athlete
The PSG forward earned \$130m in 12 months



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Remittance in 2021
Bangladesh 7th highest recipient: WB

EDIBLE OIL CRISIS

Seizures show how hoarding is at play

STAR REPORT

The seizure of hundreds of thousands of litres of hoarded edible oil in the last one week has proved the claim that unscrupulous traders created the crisis to be able to sell cooking oil at higher prices.

As different government agencies raid shops and warehouses, seizing large stockpiles of soybean oil, it becomes clear why soybean oil disappeared from most of the grocery stores across the country in the last week of April. The shortage still persists.

Yesterday, officials seized around 3.5 lakh litres of edible oil in eight districts and fined the hoarders Tk 4.35 lakh. Two thirds of the recoveries were made in three warehouses in Khulna.

In the preceding three days, the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection (DNCRP) seized over 2.84 lakh litres of edible oil from warehouses across the country. The seized oil was later sold to the customers at the prices mentioned on the bottles.

The recoveries came over a month after the DNCRP warned that mill owners, dealers and wholesalers were out to manipulate the supply of edible oil, using the pretext of price hike in the international market, Ramadan and Russia-Ukraine war.

Ghulam Rahman, president of Consumers Association of Bangladesh, said the recoveries prove that the oil crisis has been an artificial one, created "in the hope of making more profit after Eid".

Strict measures should be taken so no one dares commit such crimes in the future, he added.

After visiting six oil refineries, the supervisory team of DNCRP in a report to the commerce ministry in late March said the refiners reduced the supply of edible oil to make more profit.

The team recommended legal measures against those involved. But there was hardly any visible action from the government.

The commerce ministry on May 5 approved a price hike of soybean oil in line with the proposals made by importers, refiners and wholesalers. The decision was aimed at ensuring smooth supply of edible oil in the market.

Edible oil supplies suffered hiccups amid the Russia-Ukraine war. To make matters worse, Indonesia, the biggest supplier of palm oil, imposed a ban on its export on April 28.

Cooking oil eventually disappeared from most of the retail shops across the country in the run-up to Eid, when demand usually goes up.

YESTERDAY'S SEIZURE

In Khulna, a mobile court led by Executive Magistrate Devashish Basak yesterday seized around 2.22 lakh litres of edible oil from warehouses of three traders in the Boro Bazar area.

Saha Traders was caught with around 95,000 litres, Ranjit Biswas and Sons 69,000 litres, and Sonali Enterprise 58,580 litres. Owners of the warehouses were fined a total of Tk 1,60,000, Basak said.

DNCRP seized at least 69,120 litres of edible oil in Sirajganj, Jhenidah, Nilphamari, and Chapainawabganj. The hoarders were fined a total of Tk 1.65 lakh.

DNRCRP and mobile courts also recovered hoarded edible oil in Khagrachhari and Cumilla yesterday ranging from 3,000 litres to 8,000 litres and slapped fines.

A mobile court in Bogura fined Fakir Oil Mill Tk 50,000 after finding 31,800 litres of soybean oil in its stock.

On Wednesday, DNCRP in Natore fined Baraigram Municipality Mayor Mazedul Bari Nayon Tk 1 lakh after finding 3,000 litres of Soybean at a warehouse owned by him.

"Strict measures should be taken so no one dares commit such crimes in the future."



Two farmers putting harvested paddy on a dinghy in a flooded farm in Govindasi area of Bhupur, Tangail. Rains over the last few days have flooded many farms in low-lying areas of the district, partially damaging the crops and disrupting harvesting work.

PHOTO: STAR

DESTINY-2000 SCAM

Form a committee to reimburse investors

Court orders govt, sentences 46 including Destiny boss Rafiqul Amin, ex-army chief Harun-Ar-Rashid

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

While sentencing 46 officials of Destiny-2000 to jail for money laundering, a Dhaka court yesterday ordered the government to form a committee to liquidate assets of a co-op of the company and return the money to its investors and shareholders.

The court also said the attached properties and frozen assets of 44 of the convicts would be forfeited in favour of the state and the committee would ensure that this money is given back to the investors and shareholders. Destiny-2000 managing director



Rafiqul Amin



Harun-Ar-Rashid

Mohammad Rafiqul Amin was sentenced to 12 years and fined Tk 200 crore, in default of which he would have to serve three more years.

Company director Lt Gen (retd) M Harun-Ar-Rashid, also former army chief, was sentenced to four years and fined Tk 3.5 crore, in default of which he would have to serve six months more.

The ex army chief was seen weeping in the courtroom yesterday. This is the first instance in Bangladesh of an army chief being convicted in a money laundering case, said Special Public Prosecutor Mir Ahmed Ali Salam.

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Crisis-hit Sri Lanka gets new PM

Cabinet likely to be appointed today; court bans ex-PM, allies from leaving the country



AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's president swore in a new prime minister yesterday to replace his brother, who was banned from leaving the country after his supporters launched violent attacks on a protest against the nation's dire economic crisis.

The new premier, Ranil Wickremesinghe, has already served in the office five times — but it remains unclear if he will be able to get any legislation through parliament.

The 73-year-old will be tasked with navigating Sri Lanka through its worst downturn in its history as an independent nation, with months of shortages and blackouts inflaming public anger.

"A cabinet is likely to be appointed tomorrow," Sudeva Hettiarachchi, a spokesman for President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, told AFP.

"We want to return the nation to a position where our people will once again have three meals a day," Wickremesinghe said after his appointment.

"Our youth must have a future."

In a televised address to the nation on Wednesday night, Rajapaksa stopped short of yielding to weeks of countrywide protests calling for him to resign.

But in a bid to win over opposition lawmakers demanding he quit, Rajapaksa, 72, pledged to give up most of his executive powers and set up a new cabinet this week.

Mahinda Rajapaksa, the president's brother, resigned as prime minister on Monday after his supporters attacked anti-government demonstrators who had been protesting peacefully for weeks.

This marked a turning point and unleashed several days of chaos and violence in which at least nine people were killed and over 200 injured, with dozens of Rajapaksa loyalist homes set on fire.

Mahinda has since fled the capital Colombo and taken refuge at the Trincomalee naval base on the country's east coast.

Yesterday, a court banned him, his politician son Namal, and more than a dozen allies from leaving the country after ordering an investigation into the violence.

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PVT AGENCIES

Hajj fees hiked by Tk 1.09 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An aspiring Bangladeshi pilgrim will now have to spend a minimum of Tk 4,63,744 to perform hajj under private agencies — around Tk 1,09,150 higher than that in 2020.

Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (HAAB), a platform of around 1,500 hajj agencies, announced the "general hajj package" yesterday at a press conference in a city hotel.

Announcing the package, HAAB President

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"HOLIDAY"

a new fortnightly page catering to your needs for travel and leisure activities will be out on Saturday.

Grab your copy!



Sitting on a pole, a precariously positioned man repairs power lines in Chattogram city's Uttar Kattali area yesterday. He has a waist harness but it seems it is not tethered to anything. He also does not have any helmet.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN