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WR1
Time to overcome vulnerabilities



WR3
Antarctica: The magical, white continent



P6
Biden pledges \$150m to Asean



P10
Domingo's remedy for battling woes

Record subsidy, but will it be enough?

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ZINA TASREEN

Strange times are these in which we live when record subsidy allocation may still come short of what is needed.

The elevated prices of commodities in the global market as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the galloping inflation at home have made living unbearable for ordinary people, particularly the poor and the vulnerable.

To mitigate the situation and to prevent the accelerating post-pandemic recovery from derailing, the government has prepared a Tk 82,745 crore subsidy package for the next fiscal year that begins on July 1.

The allocation is an increase of 53.7 percent from this year's original outlay, which, in turn, had to be revised upwards by 24.1 percent to Tk 66,825 crore to contain the ripple effect of the Ukraine war, which began on February 24.

In March, the prices of oil catapulted to a 14-year high and those of



A two-storey building stands on a wetland in the capital's Nandipara. A makeshift bamboo bridge is the only way for its residents to get in and out of home. Many other landlords in the area have put up such risky structures, showing complete disregard for the safety of the residents. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

PRICES OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES

Fresh hike adds to plight of low-income people

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Amid the struggle to cope with the record hike in edible oil prices, a fresh surge in prices of other daily essentials has dealt a further blow to those with low incomes.

Lentils have seen their prices go up by Tk 20 per kg over the last week, while eggs have also become more expensive.

The price of commodities like powder milk, flour and spices also saw a rise over the same period.

Retailers and wholesalers fear that the price of these import-dependent items will increase further due to the supply disruption caused by the Russia-Ukraine war.

The price of lentils (big grain), a good source of protein for the poor, shot up to Tk 100 from Tk 80-85 a week ago.

The price of lentils (small grain) rose to Tk 130 per kg from Tk 120 at different kitchen markets in the capital.

Anwar Hossain, a staffer of Prantika Traders in the capital's Karwan Bazar,

"We thought price of essentials would go down after the Eid. Now traders are saying it will continue to rise. If everything becomes costlier, what will we eat?"

said, "About two months ago, we sold lentils [big grain] at Tk 65 per kg. Now we have to buy it from wholesalers for Tk 95."

He said the price of powdered milk shot up by Tk 70 to Tk 710 per kg. "We're told that the price will go up further

as the import of the product has been disrupted," he said.

Contacted, Shafi Mahmud, president of Bangladesh Dal Baboshayi Samity, said a shortage in supply of lentils has pushed up prices.

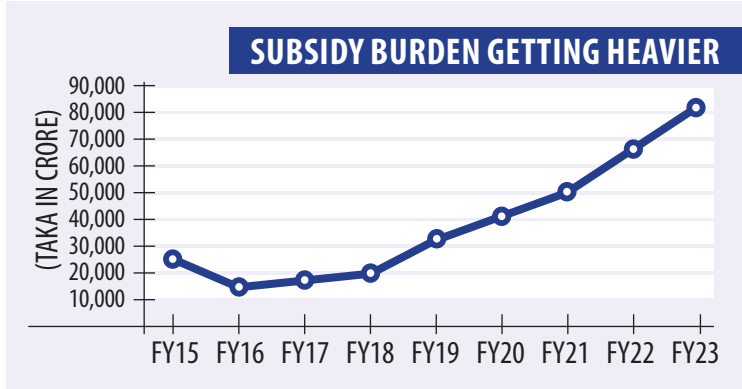
"Due to the war, import of lentils has been disrupted. We're not getting enough goods," he said, adding that lentil is imported from Australia and chickpeas from Russia.

The price of eggs, another good source of protein, also went up by Tk 1 per piece with a dozen eggs now sold for Tk 120 at different kitchen markets of the capital.

Moreover, the prices of chicken, beef and mutton show no signs of dropping after the hikes during the Ramadan.

Monirul Islam, a consumer buying rice from a shop at Kawran Bazar

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



fertilisers and natural gas to record levels as countries scrambled to make sure they have enough stock of reliable energy before supplies from Russia, the world's biggest exporter of crude, fuel and natural gas, begin to contract.

The government has no option but to increase the allocation for subsidies, said Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

"It would not be right to pass on the higher prices to the ordinary people -- their purchasing power has already declined. This year must be viewed as an exception. Because, the situation in the international market will not go on for too long and will fall back to historical trend," he added.

In that spirit, the administered pricing for oil, fertiliser, gas and electricity is being subsidised generously to offset the impact of inflation, which leapt to a 17-month high in March.

The biggest allocation in the upcoming year's subsidy provision is going towards electricity generation: Tk 18,000 crore, which is a doubling of this fiscal year's original budget and a 50 percent increase from the revised budget.

Fertiliser is being subsidised liberally, in keeping with governments everywhere.

Some Tk 15,000 crore has been earmarked to subsidise key soil nutrients, which, in turn, can suppress the runaway inflation. The

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

CRISIS-HIT SRI LANKA

New PM struggles to form unity govt

Opposition lawmakers refuse to join his cabinet, demand fresh elections; protesters vow to continue anti-govt campaign



AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's new prime minister yesterday struggled to forge a unity government and forestall an imminent economic collapse as opposition lawmakers refused to join his cabinet and demanded fresh elections.

Ranil Wickremesinghe was sworn in late Thursday to navigate his country through the worst downturn in its history as an independent nation, with months of shortages and blackouts inflaming public anger.

The 73-year-old insists he has enough support to govern and approached several legislators to join him, but four opposition parties

have already said his premiership lacks legitimacy.

Senior opposition lawmaker Harsha de Silva publicly rejected an overture to take charge of the finance ministry and said he would instead push for the government's resignation.

"People are not asking for political games and deals, they want a new system that will safeguard their future," he said in a statement.

De Silva said he was joining "the people's struggle" to topple President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and would not support any political settlement that left the leader in place.

Huge public demonstrations

have for weeks condemned Rajapaksa over his administration's mismanagement of the worsening economic crisis.

Hundreds remain outside his seafloor office in the capital Colombo at a protest camp that has for the past month campaigned for him to step down.

"We will stop this struggle when our people get justice," said Chamalage Shivakumar, one of the hundreds of people who have camped out at the protest site in the capital.

"Whoever they appoint as prime minister, we will not stop this struggle until people get relief."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 7

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
মাধ্যমিক ও উচ্চ শিক্ষা বিভাগ
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তারিখ: ০৮ মে ২০২২খ্রি.

সৃজনশীল প্রজন্ম সমৃদ্ধ আগামী বঙ্গবন্ধু সৃজনশীল মেধা অন্বেষণ-২০২২

বিজ্ঞপ্তি

দেশব্যাপী বঙ্গবন্ধু সৃজনশীল মেধা অন্বেষণের লক্ষ্যে শিক্ষা মন্ত্রণালয় কর্তৃক নিম্নোক্ত ৩টি গ্রুপে ও ৫টি বিষয়ে ৬ষ্ঠ হতে দ্বাদশ শ্রেণি পর্যন্ত শিক্ষার্থীদের অংশগ্রহণে এ প্রতিযোগিতার আয়োজন করা হয়।

| ক্রমিক নং | গ্রুপ | বিষয় | | | | | সেরা মেধাবী প্রতি গ্রুপ সংখ্যা |
|--------------|---------------------|----------------|---------|---------------------|---------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| | | ভাষা ও সাহিত্য | বিজ্ঞান | গণিত ও কম্পিউটার | বাংলাদেশ স্টাডিজ | বাংলাদেশ স্টাডিজ ও মুক্তিযুদ্ধ (গুণমাত্র বিশেষ চাহিদাসম্পন্ন/ অতিরিক্ত শিক্ষার্থীদের জন্য) | |
| ১. | ৬ষ্ঠ- ৮ম শ্রেণি | ১ | ১ | ১ | ১ | ১ | ৫ |
| ২. | ৯ম-১০ম শ্রেণি | ১ | ১ | ১ | ১ | ১ | ৫ |
| ৩. | একাদশ-দ্বাদশ শ্রেণি | ১ | ১ | ১ | ১ | ১ | ৫ |
| মোট | | | | | | | ১৫ |

প্রতিযোগিতার সময়সূচি:

জাতীয় পর্যায়ে ১৭ মে ২০২২ খ্রি.

স্থান : সরকারি টিচার্স ট্রেনিং কলেজ, ঢাকা।
সময় : সকাল ০৯:০০ ঘটিকা

প্রতিযোগিতায় বিজয়ীদের পুরস্কার:
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(ফৌজিয়া জাফরীন এনজিসি)
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