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Prices drop in global markets, not at home

MOHAMMAD SUMAN and SUKANTA HALDER

Even though prices of loose palm and soybean oil have dropped in wholesale markets, consumers are not being able to reap the benefits as retailers are still selling those at the government-fixed prices.

Yesterday, a litre of palm oil was being sold at Tk 12 less than the price fixed by the government at the retail level and soybean oil at Tk 5 less, said traders at Chattogram's Khatunganj and Dhaka's Moulvibazar -- the country's two main wholesale markets.

They also said the drop was due to the price decline in the international market and that the government should fix its retail rates accordingly.

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi recently said the edible oil prices will come down soon.

Importers, however, are against the reduction. They say they have imported the products, now in the market, at higher prices.

In the wholesale market, loose palm oil is now being sold at Tk 156-158 and soybean oil at Tk 172-174, said traders, adding that the two products' prices have been falling in the international market for the past month.

Meanwhile, the government fixed the wholesale price of loose palm oil at Tk 170 per litre, and loose soybean oil at Tk 178 per litre. The retail price is Tk 2 higher per litre than those.

According to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh, loose palm oil was sold at Tk 175-182 per litre, loose soybean oil at Tk 182 to Tk 190, and bottled soybean oil at Tk 195 to 200 in retail markets on Thursday.

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A massive fire burns a private container depot in Chattogram's Sitakunda to ashes, claiming at least four lives and injuring over a hundred. The photo was taken around 2:30am today.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

RIGHTS SITUATION

US can indeed raise concerns

Says state dept spokesperson about Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Considering the robust partnership among the two countries, the US can raise concerns over various issues in Bangladesh, said Ned Price, spokesperson for the US State Department.

"As part of our partnership, we're in a position to raise a number of issues, shared interests, but also concerns."

The comments came in response to a journalist's questions at a press briefing at the state department on Thursday.

Earlier on June 1, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen sent a message to reporters, insisting them to question the US Ambassador in Bangladesh regarding their own human rights issues.

He had said that nearly 1 lakh US citizens go missing in America every year, and even children are deprived of reuniting with their Hispanic parents.

The minister asked why the US obstructed the broadcast of RT TV (a Russian TV channel) if it wanted "freedom of press".

He also questioned the rights situation of immigrants, including the African-Americans and Hispanics, in the US and the "lack of faith of young Americans in their election process".

Speaking to the reporters, Price said the US regularly raises human rights issues with Bangladesh both publicly and privately.

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BLOCK ALLOCATIONS

Focus shifts to war fallout from jabs

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government is not keeping a separate allocation for vaccines in the next fiscal year's budget as it pulls back from vaccine procurement given the high inoculation rate and low infection rates.

In the past two fiscal years, Tk 10,000 crore was earmarked in the budget for vaccine procurement. There would not be any such allocation in the upcoming fiscal year's budget, which will be unveiled in the parliament on June 9.

Bangladesh has targeted to inoculate 70 percent of the population with two doses of the Covid-19 vaccine in line with the World Health Organisation's target.

As of June 2, 69.03 percent of the population have received double doses, according to data from the Directorate General of Health Services. Of those who have received the full dose,

12.79 percent have received the booster dose.

Besides, Bangladesh has managed to more or less flatten



the curve on coronavirus cases: despite the economy fully reopening, the caseload has remained in double digits for months now, with the odd death here and there from Covid-19.

"We are expecting the situation to stay this way, so there is no need to buy more vaccines," said a finance ministry official involved with the

proceedings.

There are enough doses in stock to get through the booster dose campaign.

"But the enthusiasm to get booster shots has been lukewarm. So we won't be purchasing vaccines afresh," he said, adding that if the need arises, funds can be managed from the revised budget for the next fiscal year.

Even from this fiscal year's allocation of Tk 10,000 crore for vaccines, Tk 6,500 crore could be spent. But even then, that amount would be retroactively adjusted with a \$500 million World Bank loan.

Of the \$500 million, \$400 million would go towards the 6.8 crore doses of vaccines procured from the Serum Institute of India and China's Sinopharm.

"The expenditure on the vaccine will be adjusted as a retrospective cost. As a result, the allotment will remain undisbursed," the official said.

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WB invited to Padma Bridge inauguration

Khaleda Zia may also be invited if law permits, says Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT


Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday verbally invited Mercy Tembon, the World Bank's country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan, to the opening ceremony of the Padma Bridge on June 25.

"I am inviting the World Bank's country director. We will send a letter too. I will not consider who was for it or against it," Quader said addressing a programme at the Brac Center where the WB country director was also present.

In 2012, the World Bank backtracked on its \$1.2 billion money-lending deal for the Padma Bridge construction on allegations of corruption, which were later rejected by a Canadian court. The decision deteriorated the relations between Bangladesh and the WB.

After the programme, Quader, also the general secretary of ruling Awami League, told reporters that BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia would also

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PADMA BRIDGE
inauguration
20 DAYS
TO GO



Engineers experimentally illuminating some of the 415 LED lamps that would light up the Padma Bridge once it is inaugurated. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Sexual harassers stab student to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A 22 year-old polytechnic student was stabbed to death on Friday by what police said were sexual harassers in Bogura town.

Alzamiu Boni, 22, a computer technology student of Bogura Polytechnic Institute, died while being treated at Bogura Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital with a stab injury above his left ear.

Quoting witnesses, Sub-inspector Sazzadul Islam of Bonani Police Outpost said Boni was visiting a small entrepreneurs' fair where a woman, who was with him, was sexually harassed by one Arif and several others.

Boni protested and

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Swiatek romps to 2nd French Open title

AFP, Paris

Iga Swiatek cruised to her second French Open title by dominating teenager Coco Gauff in the final on Saturday, as the world number one claimed her 35th successive victory.

The 21-year-old Pole stormed to a 6-1, 6-3 win in only 68 minutes on Court Philippe Chatrier, equalling Venus Williams' record for the longest winning run by a woman in the 21st century.

Swiatek celebrated her sixth straight title this year in the players' box with her friends and family.

A disconsolate Gauff was left sitting on her seat in tears after a nervous performance, punctuated by 23 unforced errors and three double faults.

The 18-year-old American came up short in her bid to become the youngest Grand Slam singles champion since Maria Sharapova won



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