



National Public Library: The end of an era



US-China rivalry overshadows Asean meet



In conversation with Wasfia Nazreen



SATIRE All cases solved, focus now on bad singers

Record hike in fuel prices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government last night hiked fuel prices by up to 51.7 percent, the highest in the country’s history, adding to the plight of common people already struggling to cope with the rising cost of living.

As per the new prices that took effect at 12:00am today, a litre of octane now costs Tk 135, which is 51.7 percent higher than the previous rate of Tk 89.

Similarly, each litre of petrol now costs Tk 130, a rise of Tk 44 or 51.1 percent, said a press release from the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, stating that the prices have been raised as fuel prices in the international market are a lot higher than that in Bangladesh.

The price of each litre of diesel and kerosene has reached Tk 114 from Tk 80.

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) had counted a loss of Tk 8,014.51 from February to July by selling fuel at low prices, said the press release.

Due to the rising prices of fuel in the international market, it said, many countries, including India, have already raised fuel prices.

In Kolkata, each litre of diesel has been sold for Rs 92.76 (Tk 114.09) per litre and petrol Rs 106.03 (Tk 130.42) since May 22. Until yesterday, petrol and diesel were Tk 34.09 and Tk 44.42 cheaper in Bangladesh, said the release.

Concern over smuggling of fuel out of the country was

	PREVIOUS PRICE	NEW PRICE	RISE
Diesel	Tk 80	Tk 114	42.5%
Kerosene	Tk 80	Tk 114	42.5%
Petrol	Tk 86	Tk 130	51.1%
Octane	Tk 89	Tk 135	51.7%

Price per litre

another reason behind the hike, it added.

The highest ever increase since the country’s independence comes at a time when people are already finding it hard to cope with rising prices of essentials.

As the news spread, hundreds of people thronged the refuelling stations across the country, hoping to buy fuel before the new rates took effect. But the station authorities stopped selling fuels, causing furore among the people.

Last week, the government hiked prices of urea fertiliser by 37.5 percent to Tk 22 per kg, a blow to farmers, many of whom suffered losses from recurring floods and low crop yields this year.

Experts say the hike in the fuel prices will cause further inflation, increasing transport fare, prices of daily essentials, and the production cost of goods. This means the lower income group would have to further tighten their belts.

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Bikers throng a filling station in the capital's Asad Gate around 11:45pm yesterday, minutes before the hike in fuel prices came into effect.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Kathmandu can use Ctg, Mongla ports

PM tells Nepali delegation

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has reiterated that Nepal can take the advantage of using Bangladesh’s Mongla and Chattogram seaports.

She said this when a visiting Nepalese parliamentary delegation, led by Pabitra Niruola Kharel, chairperson of International Relations Committee at House of Representatives of Federal Parliament of Nepal, paid a courtesy call on her at the Gono Bhavan yesterday.

Hasina said Bangladesh is developing Saidpur airport as a regional airport which the neighbouring countries can use, said a press release of the press wing of the Prime Minister’s Office.

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Waiting for the rain

Farmers worry over Aman yield as harsh weather hits them hard

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and PINAKI ROY

After a spell of extreme heat and scanty rain in the last two consecutive months, farmers across the country were expecting favourable weather for a good harvest of rain-fed Aman paddy, which accounts for 39 percent of total grain production.

But much to their dismay, the weather forecast says the rainfall this month will be less than the monthly average of 460mm, which may trigger a drop in Aman yield and rise in the production cost.

Apart from the low rain, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, mild heat waves may hit the country while some parts may witness short- and mid-term flooding.

Experts fear the lack of rains coupled with higher temperature will delay the transplantation of Aman, the second biggest crop in Bangladesh after Boro, a worrying prospect amid the rising prices of cereals.

The adverse weather will make the farmers go for supplementary irrigations to get the expected yield, which will push up the production cost, they said.

Like Bangladesh, rice output is also at risk in other top rice suppliers, including India, where adverse weather is threatening to reduce the production and stoke food inflation that is already

near record highs, according to an analysis by Reuters.

The report citing data from India’s state-run weather department said top rice producing states of Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh have recorded a monsoon rainfall deficit of as much as 45 percent so far this season.

Rice has bucked the trend of rising food prices amid bumper crops and large inventories at exporters over the past two years, even as Covid-19, supply disruptions and more recently the Russia-Ukraine conflict made other grains costlier, says the analysis.

But the inclement weather in exporting countries in Asia, which accounts for about 90 percent of the world’s rice output, is also likely to change the price trajectory, it said, quoting traders and analysts.

“Rice has remained accessible even as overall food prices reached record levels earlier this year,” Reuters quoted

UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation economist, Shirley Mustafa, as saying.

“We are now witnessing weather-related setbacks in some key rice producing countries, including India, China and Bangladesh, which could result in lower output if conditions don’t improve in the next few weeks,” Mustafa added.

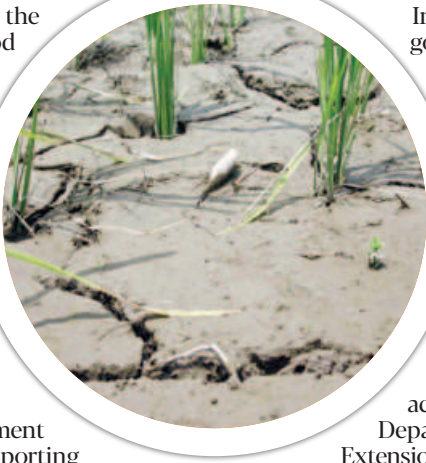
In Bangladesh, the government had set a target to bag 1.63 crore tonnes of Aman to offset the losses of Boro and Aus crops caused by floods.

As of August 4, farmers could transplant Aman on around 14 lakh hectares of land against the government’s target of 56.2 lakh hectares, according to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

Aman production is heavily reliant on monsoon rains as the process of preparing seedbeds for transplanting seedlings is almost over during the peak June-August rainy season, say agriculturists.

A large number of farmers in the

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RAPE ON BUS ‘Mastermind’ of robbery still on run

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police are looking for a man named Ratan who is suspected of being the mastermind of last week’s robbery on a bus in Tangail.

He recruited the other suspects and planned the crime along with two others, Sarkar Mohammad Kaiser, superintendent of police in Tangail, told The Daily Star.

Police arrested two other suspects yesterday, taking the number of detained suspects to three. All of them denied raping the woman who alleged that she was raped by the robbers six times in the moving bus, the SP said.

Immediately after the heist, Ratan took the other suspects to his grandmother’s house which is about a kilometre away from where they abandoned the bus.

“They took some rest at the house for a while and then left,” the SP added.

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STAR FILE PHOTO



AUGUST CRUCIAL MONTH FOR AMAN

- Transplantation of Aman, which accounts for 39% of grain production, has to be done by August
- This season’s Aman cultivation target 56.2 lakh hectares
- Around 14 lakh hectares of it cultivated till August 4

BANGLADESH WEATHER IN AUGUST

- Possibility of rainfall less than average
- Depression in the Bay
- Countrywide mild heatwave
- Short- to mid-term flooding in northern, north-eastern and south-eastern regions

EXPERTS RECOMMEND MEASURES

- Government should import rice before severe crisis starts
- Go for shorter-duration variety of Aman
- Educate farmers about not wasting water and fertiliser
- Provide subsidy to marginal farmers

“The government should focus on supplementary irrigation at free of cost to encourage farmers and ensure production. As floods have damaged seedlings in some places, the government should come up with agricultural rehabilitation programmes immediately.”

AMM Shawkat Ali
Former food adviser to the caretaker government

GLOBAL CHALLENGES

- Rice output in India, China, Bangladesh, Vietnam at risk
- Weather damage to rice crops comes amid near record food prices
- Rice prices have eased this year even as wheat, soybeans peaked
- African, Asian demand seen rising as harvest wraps up

“We are now witnessing weather-related setbacks in some key rice producing countries, including India, China and Bangladesh, which could result in lower output if conditions don’t improve in the next few weeks.”

Shirley Mustafa
UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation economist

India’s top rice producing states of Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh have recorded a monsoon rainfall deficit of as much as 45% so far this season.



PHOTO: REUTERS

China scraps key co-ops with US

Suspends dialogues on issues including climate change, imposes sanctions on Pelosi

AGENCIES

China yesterday said it was ending cooperation with the United States on a litany of key issues including climate change, anti-drug efforts and military talks, as relations between the two superpowers nosedive over Taiwan.

Beijing has reacted furiously to US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan, which it claims as its territory and has vowed to retake it – by force if necessary.

China has encircled the self-ruled, democratic island with a series of huge military drills that have been roundly condemned by the United States and other Western allies.

Chinese foreign ministry yesterday hit back further against the United States, suspending talks and cooperation on multiple agreements between the two – including on climate change.

China’s foreign ministry also said that it was also suspending cooperation with Washington on prevention of cross-border crime and drug trafficking, and on repatriating illegal migrants, among eight specific measures.

In a statement released soon after Pelosi left Japan on the final leg of her Asian tour, China also cancelled a planned bilateral meeting on a maritime military security mechanism.

Beijing separately announced that it would personally sanction Pelosi and her immediate family in response to her “vicious” and “provocative” actions.

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CHINA FM’S VISIT Beijing eager to deepen ties with Dhaka

Say experts

PORIMOL PALMA

China wants to deepen ties with Bangladesh as global geopolitical polarisation is sharpening, and this would



be a major objective of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi’s two-day visit to Bangladesh starting today, say international relations analysts.

According to them, China considers Bangladesh a very important South Asian country not only for its growing economy and trade but also for strategic location – linking South

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