



P6 S Korea pardons Samsung boss 'to help economy'



P10 Another year of Shakib's shenanigans



WR1 Call for electoral reforms comes to the fore



WR4 SATIRE Development meant to help people: Study



The ramshackle Paka Arot Bhaban of the capital's Karwan Bazar is in danger of caving in any time. The roof of the building has been propped up with iron pipes to avoid collapse. Traders still run businesses there, putting themselves and customers in harm's way. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

KALURGHAT BRIDGE IN CTG Cost to rise 5-fold as new design placed

4 years lost for 'incomplete design'

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

The long-awaited Kalurghat Rail-cum-Road Bridge Project of Bangladesh Railway has been delayed by four years even before the work began, due to its incomplete architectural design.

A redesigning of the bridge over the Karnaphuli river, adding a road deck above the previously designed rail deck, has seen the estimated project cost go up by Tk 5,141 crore, taking the total cost to Tk 6,341 crore, said railway officials.

In 2018, the BR had planned to implement the project at an estimated cost of Tk 1,200 crore. It was supposed to be completed in 2024.

But the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) on August 7 that year returned the project proposal, citing that the architectural design was incomplete, said Golam Mostafa, focal person of the project.

On July 5 this year, Yooshin Engineering Corporation, a subsidiary of South Korea's state-owned Exim Bank, a potential donor of the project, submitted a revised proposal to the BR on location, design, cost and construction period of

the 780-metre-long bridge.

A feasibility study on the project and its architectural design have been prepared by the Korean company, the officials added.

The current Kalurghat railway bridge, built in 1931, was declared "risky" by the BR in 2001.

- Project taken up in 2018
- Initial estimated cost Tk 1,200cr
- Revised cost Tk 6,341cr

Trains now run on the bridge at a speed of 10km/h. Vehicles bound for Boalkhali and Patiya upazilas in South Chattogram also use the structure.

Traffic congestion is a common sight on both ends of the bridge as traffic can only move one way at a time.

Mostafa said South Korea's Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) agreed to provide 100 percent funding for the revamped project as loan on soft conditions.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

3 more projects may get costlier

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Four years ago, the government approved a project to construct a container port on the Meghna river in Brahmanbaria's Ashuganj at an estimated cost of Tk 1,293 crore.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) was supposed to complete the project by this December, but officials are now seeking two more years and an additional Tk 458 crore.

A proposal for revising the project, titled Establishment of Inland Container River Port at Ashuganj, is likely to be placed in the August 16 meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council.

Two other projects will be placed in the meeting for revisions.

Extension of project deadlines and requirement of additional funds have been so common in recent years that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed disappointment over the matter multiple times and ordered officials to come up with proper project plans.

According to the new proposal for the river port, the final "drawing design" of the project has made more funds necessary. Besides, changes in the schedule of rates, layouts of different infrastructures, and ground improvement were among the other factors driving up the cost and time, mentioned the document.

The project aims to facilitate shipment of containers from ports in Chattogram, Mongla and other places. It will contribute to the economic development of the country and benefit regional and sub-regional trade, it added.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Further blow to consumers

Prices of essentials rise by up to 14pc in a week after govt hiked fuel prices

MAHUBUR RAHMAN KHAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

People struggling to keep up with rising prices of essentials have to spend even more on food since the government hiked fuel prices a week ago.

The fallouts from the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war had forced consumers, especially those with fixed incomes, into curbing expenditure to make ends meet over the last few months.

From August 6, the government raised fuel prices by up to 51.7 percent, the highest in the country's history. The price of diesel, the fuel mostly used to power vehicles transporting goods, shot up by 42.5 percent from Tk 80 per litre to Tk 114.

A day after the record hike, prices of

varieties of rice shot up by between 4.38 percent and 6.12 percent on Thursday.

A week ago, the retail price of fine rice was Tk 75 per kg. It is now Tk 78 kg. The coarse rice shot up by Tk 4 to Tk 54.

Kamal Hossain, owner of Mokbul Rice Agency in the capital's Mirpur-11, blamed the rice mill owners. "They are cashing in on the fuel price hike."

He said the cost of imported coarse rice had increased due to tax and high dollar price, but the mill owners increased prices of local varieties as well.

"We bought miniket rice from a wholesaler at Tk 3,250 per 50 kg a week ago. Yesterday [Thursday] we bought it at Tk 3,500," said Shahadat, a shopkeeper in Jatrabari, adding that they are now selling each 50-kg sack for Tk 3,600.

	YESTERDAY'S PRICE	PRICE A WEEK AGO
RICE (COARSE) (KG)	TK 50-54	TK 48-50
FLOUR (KG)	TK 58-62	TK 55-58
ATTA (KG)	TK 45-50	TK 40-42
BROILER CHICKEN (KG)	TK 170-190	TK 150-165
EGG (4 PIECES)	TK 43-47	TK 40-42
SOYBEAN OIL LOOSE (LITRE)	TK 165-172	TK 162-166
LENTIL (KG)	TK 105-110	TK 100-110

SOURCE:TCB

rice, lentil, onions, eggs, edible oil and chicken shot up between 4.38 percent and 14.29 percent, according to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB).

Traders are blaming the hike in transport fare and the fall of the value of the taka against the dollar as the main reasons behind the escalation.

"No matter how much I curtail my expenses, I can't cope with the skyrocketing prices," said Alamgir Hossain, a waiter of Marlin restaurant in the capital's Motijheel.

"I used to have beef at home every Friday. In the last few months, I replaced it with chicken ... but the price of chicken also surged. A 2-kg broiler chicken costs Tk 400 now," said Alamgir, while buying 250 grams of non-bottled soybean oil at Tk 196 per kg from a shop in Jatrabari.

Over the last week, the price of loose soybean oil shot up to Tk 196 from Tk 160 per kg while the price of eggs shot up by Tk 39 per dozen, these correspondents found after visiting different kitchen markets in the capital yesterday.

According to the TCB, prices of all

"The price of almost every product delivered to us in the last few days has increased. Those who did not increase the price, had reduced quantity," said Shahadat.

Showing a pack of biscuit that cost Tk 10, he said suppliers did not increase its price but reduced the number of biscuits in the packet.

The continuously escalating price of essential items, has caused RMG worker Sabana Khatun to adjust her expenditure to survive.

The combined income of Sabana and her husband is about Tk 27,000. After rent and other expenses, they used to be able to send Tk 5,000 to her ageing father-in-law in Bogura.

"From this month I'm sending Tk 3,000 to my father-in-law. We have no other option..."

Even those with higher incomes are feeling the pinch. Nayeem Ahmed earns Tk 80,000 per month at a private firm. He spends Tk 25,000 for house rent, pays Tk

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Mugger kills trader inside ATM booth

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A trader was stabbed to death by a mugger inside an ATM booth in the capital's Uttara area early yesterday.

The victim, Sharif Ullah, 44, was one of the owners of Jakia Tiles Gallery and Sanitary in Uttara Sector-12.

Abdus Samad, 38, entered the booth when Sharif was counting the money after withdrawing it from the ATM booth of Dutch-Bangla Bank Ltd in Uttara Sector-11 around 12:45am, said Mohammad Mohsin, officer-in-charge of Uttara West Police Station, quoting the statement of a case filed in this connection.

Samad tried to snatch the money but Sharif resisted. He then stabbed Sharif in the throat, injuring him critically, the OC said.

Hearing Sharif's screams, the security guard of the ATM booth and some pedestrians chased down Samad and handed him over to police, he added.

Sharif was rushed to a nearby hospital where doctors declared him dead, the OC added.

His brother Anwar Hossain yesterday filed a case with Uttara West Police Station.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



The construction of the third and fourth dual gauge rail lines from Dhaka to Tongi is underway. The deadline for opening the lines is June 2023. The photo was taken in the capital's Khilkhet recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Bangladeshis are 'living in heaven'

Says Momen

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said the people of Bangladesh were as happy as if they were living in heaven.

"Amid the global recession, people in Bangladesh are happier than those in many other countries; one could say that they are living in heaven. Yes, we also have challenges and that's why we took steps to cut expenditures," he told reporters at Osmani International Airport in Sylhet.

About Swiss Ambassador Nathalie Chuard's comment that Bangladesh has not sought specific information on the money Bangladeshis deposited to Swiss banks, Momen said, "The ambassador is probably new and doesn't know about the matter. And the media is making too much of it."

"Switzerland is a friendly country, but the confusion of facts should not have

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

