

"According to the results (of investigation) ... there can be no mercy for those who organised, ordered and carried out [the bombing]."

Russia's FM Sergei Lavrov on the killing of Alexander Dugin's daughter.



REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXII No. 213

BHADRA 9, 1429 BS

www.thedailystar.net

MUHARRAM 25, 1444 HJRI

16 PAGES : Tk 15.00



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## EVM use in 150 seats max

### EC decides, opposition parties condemn

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and RASHIDUL HASAN

The Election Commission has decided to use EVMs in up to 150 parliamentary seats in the next general election though major opposition political parties still have no confidence in the voting machine.

The commission, however, has yet to choose the constituencies where EVMs will be used, and it will be finalised when the election schedule is fixed.

Top EC officials said they would use EVMs mostly in the urban seats with smooth transportation and also where the devices were earlier used for different elections.

The opposition parties have slammed the decision saying it only proved that the Election Commission was subservient to the ruling party and only implementing the government's will.

The BNP and its allies have long been opposing polling with electronic voting machines, saying the devices would allow the ruling party to "steal votes".

The Jatiya Party, the main opposition in parliament, and the Gono Forum also have taken stance against EVM during recent talks with the EC.

Yesterday, after an Election Commission meeting,



Tea estate workers intercept Paharika Express just outside Kulara Railway Station yesterday afternoon, demanding a wage hike to Tk 300 daily from Tk 120. Most of the workers have been abstaining from work for about two weeks though their leaders announced an end to the protests after garden owners agreed to raise the wage to Tk 145. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

## Longing for home

### Say Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar ahead of 5th anniversary of influx

MOHAMMAD AL MASUM MOLLA and MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAT from Cox's Bazar

For Shamsul Ahmed, life in the Rohingya refugee camp is now much better than it was five years ago, but his heart longs for home.

The man from Maungdaw of Myanmar, now in his mid-60s, ran for his life with his family of 13 when deadly violence erupted there. They travelled through the hills for three days and then, one evening in August 2017, crossed the Naf river into Bangladesh.

Landing in Ukhiya upazila's Kutupalong area of Cox's Bazar, they found relative safety, but life on the green and hilly terrain in Bangladesh's southern tip was still precarious.

"Although we escaped the jaws of death, it was all too uncertain here in the forest. We [along with many other refugees] cleared the jungle to make our shack inside the overcrowded camp, which lacked adequate sanitation. We used to sleep on the floor without any mattress," said Ahmed, father of six sons and five daughters.

Five years down the line, the bamboo-and-tarpaulin shacks of Ahmed and thousands of others have given way to better huts, most with concrete floors. The hillsides, which had looked barren without trees or foliage, are marked by a number of buildings and brick roads. The greenery has been restored to a large extent.

"We are better off now as we have been provided with many facilities in the camp. But no matter how much quality of life improves here, my mind cries for home. I want to go back to Burma [Myanmar] as soon as possible," said Ahmed, now in his early 70s.

Life in the Rohingya camps has progressed since the early days of the largest influx, with better roads and more latrines and limited drinking water points. Solar panels installed in front yards and on roofs, and the shops and small stores inside the camps are some of the signs showing the improvement of living standards in the world's largest refugee camp.

Tomorrow will mark five years since the largest exodus from Rakhine State was seen and refugees started arriving on these shores. The initiatives of the refugees themselves, the government and NGOs has brought about improvements in living conditions, but the feeling of statelessness remains.

Bangladesh is currently hosting

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Shamsul Ahmed

**"The EC has demonstrated EVM before us and we are convinced that there is no scope for election fraudulence using this machine. A voter will be able to cast vote for the candidate of his or her choice."**

Kazi Zafarullah, presidium member of Awami League



**"The decision to use EVMs in the polls is actually the government's decision, not the Election Commission's. The EC is just a weapon to fulfil the will of the government."**

Nazrul Islam Khan, standing committee member of BNP



**"We don't support the EC's decision to use EVMs in the general election. The EC did not honour the parties that opposed EVMs during the talks. We condemn the decision."**

Mujibul Haque Chunnun, secretary general of Jatiya Party (Ershad)



EC Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath told reporters that they have decided to use EVMs in "not more than 150 constituencies" in the next general election.

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal and all election commissioners were present in the meeting.

"At this moment, we have the capacity to use EVMs in 70-75 seats," Ashok said, adding the commission has a total of 1.5 lakh EVMs and they would buy more, if necessary.

Asked about the opposition from various political parties, he said, "The commission has taken the decision after taking the recommendations of political parties into consideration."

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## BPC IRREGULARITIES JS committee STUNNED

RASHIDUL HASAN and ASIFUR RAHMAN

There has been no external audit of the accounts of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation over the last 10 years, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Undertakings has found.

Expressing shock at the widespread irregularities in the state-run BPC, the committee said that even the audit objections raised by the Comptroller and Auditor General of Bangladesh in fiscal 2012-13 have not been disposed of till now.

"There is little transparency and accountability in the BPC. We are shocked to see the extent of irregularities," ASM Feroz, chief of the parliamentary body, said after a meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

In fiscal 2012-13, the CAG found irregularities of Tk 9,295.4 crore in the two previous fiscal years. The BPC replied to most of the objections, but the CAG said those were "not acceptable".

"On May 22 this year, the public accounts committee of parliament asked the BPC to provide it with all the proof supporting BPC's claims by the next two months. But the BPC is yet to provide those," Khan Md

Ferdousur Rahman, deputy comptroller and auditor general at the CAG, said at yesterday's meeting.

According to the 2012-13 audit report, the BPC lost Tk 708 crore in interest for failing to collect dues of Tk 5,957 crore from three distributor companies - Padma, Meghna and Jamuna - between 2010 and 2012.

"On one hand, the BPC supplied fuel to the three distributor companies at subsidised prices. Instead of paying the BPC in due time, the distributors deposited the money with their bank accounts and got a large amount of money in interest and made profits. This allowed those distributors to pay their officials extra money as incentive bonus and provide money to Workers Profit Participation Fund," the audit report mentioned.

The BPC, however, claimed it had collected the dues from the distributors but could not furnish any proof to support its claims, the CAG said in the report.

"The BPC never initiated any reconciliation of accounts for eight years [till fiscal 2012-13] - a major part of financial management. This is a violation of the rules as the BPC was supposed to carry it out within six months

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## All-EVM polls to 61 zila parishads on October 17

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Elections at 61 zila parishads will be held using electronic voting machines on October 17, around four months after the parishads were dissolved by the government.

Election Commission Secretariat's Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath announced the date for polls yesterday.

September 15 is the last date for submission of nomination papers at those zila parishads, except the three Chattogram hill tracts districts, he added.

The last date of candidature withdrawal will be September 22.

Deputy Commissioners of the districts will serve as returning officers in the elections.

Over a century-old local government body, zila parishads, were revived via the first-ever zila parishad polls that took place on December 28, 2016.

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## Soybean oil officially up Tk 7-9 a litre

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

The government yesterday hiked the price of soybean oil for the fourth time this year even though the price of the product in the international market held steady in the past month.

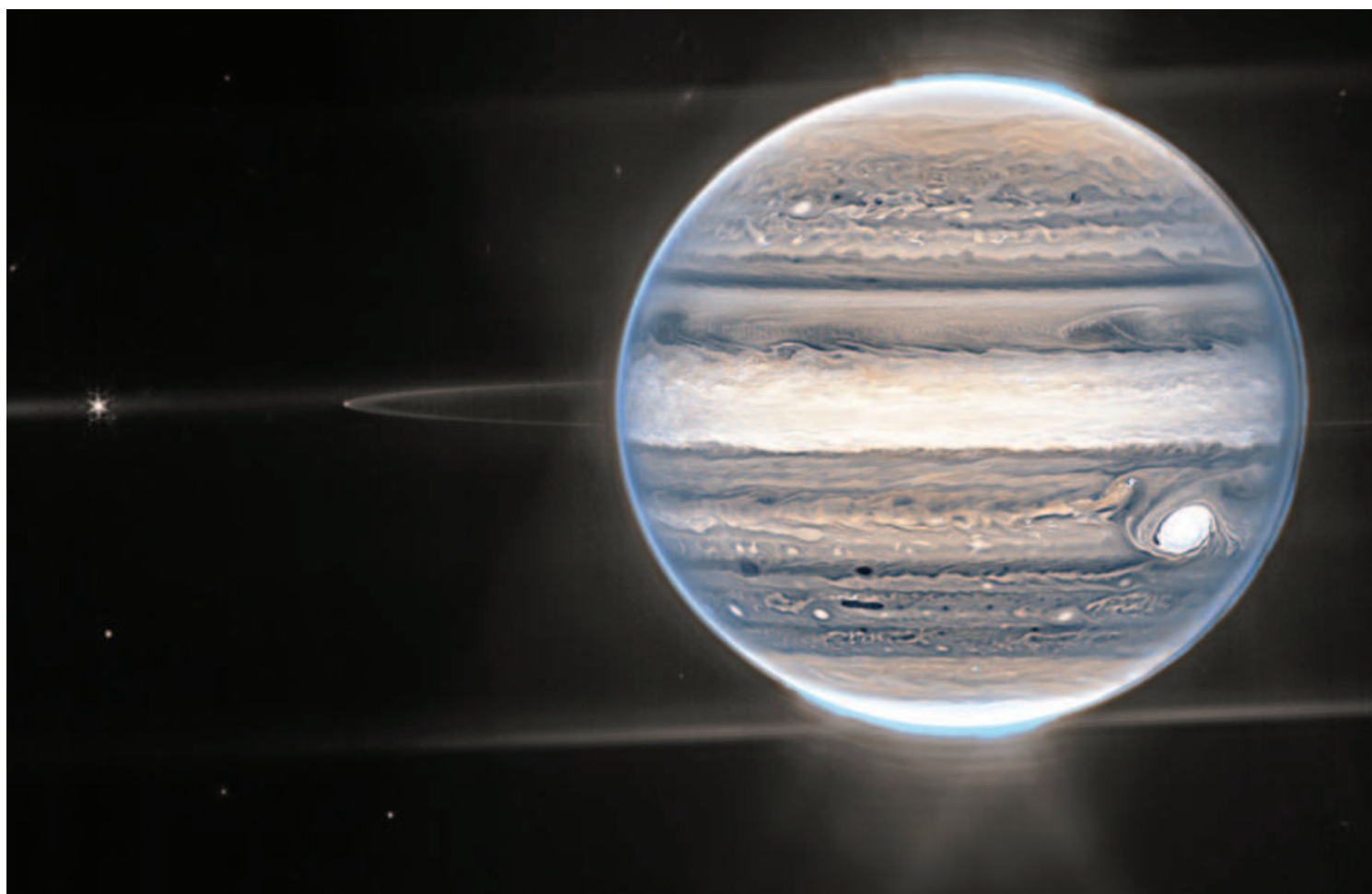
Now, each litre of bottled soybean oil will cost Tk 192, up from Tk 185. Loose soybean oil will cost Tk 9 more at Tk 175 a litre.

The new prices come after the refiners sought a price adjustment due to the stronger dollar.

Subsequently, on August 17, the commerce ministry and the Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission fixed the new maximum retail price, said a notification of the Bangladesh Vegetable Oil Refinery' and Vanaspani Manufacturers' Association, a platform of refiners and marketing companies.

At the same time, the palm oil price was revised downwards to Tk 145 per litre from Tk 152.

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In this image obtained from Nasa and taken by the James Webb Space Telescope, shows Jupiter in a wide-field view, showing the planet with its faint rings, which are a million times fainter than the planet, and two tiny moons called Amalthea, left, andAdrastea at the edge of the ring.

PHOTO: AFP

## Govt trying to shore up Aman harvest Promises power for irrigation

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

The government is trying to make an all-out effort to ensure a good Aman harvest, ensuring uninterrupted electricity supply to farmers for irrigation as it looks to ensure food security amid global economic uncertainty.

Usually, farmers use power for irrigation between February and April for the cultivation of the summer crop Boro. But there was less rainfall this year, posing a threat to the production of Aman, which accounted for 39 percent of the rice output in fiscal 2021-22.

"The soil has developed cracks for want of irrigation - that is why we are uncertain about Aman production," said Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque at a workshop held yesterday at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council.

Subsequently, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had given a directive to the power division to ensure uninterrupted electricity at Monday's cabinet meeting.

"I hope they will follow the order," Razzaque said. The government is aiming to ensure Aman plantation in the cent percent land by this month and irrigation for 30 days, said Balai Krishna Hazra, additional secretary (fertiliser management and monitoring) of the agriculture ministry.

This year, the government has targeted Aman cultivation on 59 lakh hectares of land, said Habibur Rahaman Chowdhury, director of the field service wing of the Department of Agriculture Extension.

So far, the Aman crop has been planted on 49 lakh hectares of land.

Aman plantation is almost complete in the northern districts but irrigation is needed in the Mymensingh division and Dhaka Division, where less rainfall has taken

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