



DHAKA THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 1, 2022

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXII No. 221

BHADRA 17, 1429 BS

www.thedailystar.net

SAFAR 4, 1444 HJURI

16 PAGES PLUS SHOUT : Tk 15.00



P4

Dengue cases double between July, Aug



P6

The man who wears many hats



P7

Misery mounts for millions in Pakistan floods



P10

Do or die for Sri Lanka, Bangladesh

Fuel price cut by Tk 5 was not needed

Says Tawfiq-e-Elahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fuel price should have been left as it is instead of the Tk 5 cut per litre, which is unlikely to have any visible impact, said Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, energy adviser to the prime minister.

"Increasing or reducing the fuel price by Tk 5 has no impact," he said at a press conference yesterday in the Prime Minister's Office called to share experiences of his recent trip to the US, during which he met with Jose W Fernandez, the US under secretary of state for economic growth, energy and the environment.

Given the current volatility in the global economy arising out of the Russia-Ukraine war, the fuel prices should have been left unchanged.

"We don't know what the situation will be going

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



Sabbir was a student of class-IV not long ago. A few months back, when his family fell upon hard times, the 11-year-old had to drop out of school. Sabbir, who suffers from a congenital eye ailment, now works at a small garment factory that produces children's attire. After the clothes are dyed, he lays them out to dry in an open space inside the Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard in Mirpur, and turns them over periodically before taking the dried clothes back. The photo was taken around 1:30pm on Wednesday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

BNP back to streets

Looks to tap into public discontent

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

After a long time, the BNP seems determined to shake off its inertia as leaders and activists are turning up in droves to protest the recent hike in prices of fuel and daily essentials.

The party's top brass believes it is high time the BNP and its allies capitalised on the growing public discontent over the cost of living crisis.

After losing power in the 2008 national elections, BNP's programmes before the 2014 polls drew flak both locally and internationally for violence, while the party could not wage any movement of note before the 2018 elections.

This time, the party is aiming to wage movements centring pro-people issues.

Party leaders said the ultimate goal is to force the Awami League government to meet the demand for polls -- slated for late next year or early 2024 -- under a non-partisan government.

To make sure that all its units take part in the programmes, the party has decided to come down hard on those found to be slacking off.

Party leaders said this time they would not leave the field despite their colleagues being arrested and attacked, and instead they would counter the backlash through issue-based programmes.

"People's backs are against the wall. The ruling party has turned daily essentials into a political commodity. People

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Bribery eats up Tk 10,830 crore

TIB study finds 71 percent households became victims of graft while getting services last year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Almost 71 percent homes had to endure corruption while getting services last year, which is 4.3 percent more than that of four years ago, found a Transparency International Bangladesh survey.

Unveiling the "Corruption in Service Sectors: National Household Survey 2021" on 15,454 homes nationwide, the TIB yesterday said the most graft-ridden service sectors were the police and its different wings, Department of Immigration and Passports, and Bangladesh Road Transport Authority.

The households had to pay an estimated Tk 10,830 crore in bribes last year, which is 0.4 percent of the country's GDP and 5.9 percent of the revised budget of 2020-2021 fiscal year, it said.

On average, each home had to pay Tk 6,636 in bribes to get services last year, said the report.

The TIB has been publishing this report since 1997 with a usual interval. The latest one, the ninth edition, was delayed by the pandemic.

The report covered at least 22 service sectors "riddled with petty corruption" but excluded areas known for large-scale corruption such as procurement, supply chain, and mega projects, the TIB said.

"... the overall service sector graft situation

is alarming and [corruption] has taken an institutional form," said TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman at the press conference organised for the report unveiling at its office.

He said corruption situation in some sectors

"It is usual that any sort of crime will turn institutional and spread its wings in the absence of trial and punishment. This has been happening here."

TIB Executive Director
Iftekharuzzaman

worsened last year while some others, including education, power, and agriculture, improved, albeit still at high level.

Iftekharuzzaman said bribery, extortion, embezzlement, deception, negligence of duty, nepotism and attempts to spread influence were marked as corruption under the study.

Unfortunately, corruption continued to

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



IMPORT PLAN

RUSSIA: 5 lakh tonnes of wheat (cost \$430 per tonne)

VIETNAM: 2.3 lakh tonnes of rice (cost \$494-\$521 per tonne)

INDIA: 1 lakh tonnes of rice (cost \$428-\$443 per tonne)

Subsidised rice for 1.5cr poor

Sale under OMS, Food Friendly Programme begins today; Govt okays import of 8.3 lakh tonnes of grains

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

The government today starts selling rice at subsidised prices in an effort to give respite to the poor and low-income earners and bring stability to the volatile rice market.

The food ministry plans to sell 7.65 lakh tonnes of rice to more than 1.5 crore people in three months.

Of the beneficiaries, one crore will get the staple for Tk 30 a kg under the Open Market Sale (OMS) and 50 lakh special cardholders for Tk 15 per kg under the Food Friendly Programme (FFP).

Yesterday, the Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase approved the import of five lakh tonnes of wheat from Russia and 3.3 lakh tonnes of rice from Vietnam and India at a total cost of \$378 million (Tk 3,590 crore) under G2G arrangements.

Besides, Bangladesh signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Myanmar for importing another two lakh tonnes of rice.

"We now have a huge stock of rice. But a large portion of it will be sold in the next three months under the OMS and the Food Friendly Programme ... The government is importing rice to replenish the stock," Shakhawat Hossain, director general at the Directorate General of Food, said yesterday.

According to the food ministry, the government had stocks of 17.5 lakh tonnes of rice and 1.4 lakh tonnes of wheat till August 30.

The move comes at a time when the poor and low-income earners are struggling to cope with the soaring prices of essentials.

In the middle of last month, the prices of all varieties of rice rose by Tk 2-5 per kg. The prices began to fall after the government reduced import duty on rice to 15.25 percent from 25 percent on August 28.

According to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), fine rice was sold for Tk 75 per kg yesterday, semi-coarse rice for Tk 60 a kg and coarse rice for Tk 56 per kg.

A week ago, the price of per kg fine rice was Tk 80, semi-coarse rice Tk 60 and coarse rice Tk 58.

WHEAT, RICE IMPORT

Yesterday, the cabinet committee approved the import of five lakh tonnes of wheat from Russia for \$214.94 million (Tk 2,042.5 crore). The import cost of wheat will be Tk 40.85 per kg.

A food ministry official said one lakh tonnes of wheat will be brought by ships every month from September to January next year.

The government will also import 3.3 lakh tonnes of rice -- 2.3 lakh tonnes from Vietnam and one lakh tonnes from India -- for \$162.94 million (Tk 1,548 crore).

The average import cost of per kg rice will be Tk 42.13.

Officials said the government is considering importing another one to two lakh tonnes of rice from India.

SALE UNDER OMS, FFP

Shakhawat Hossain said the government will sell rice under the OMS and the FFP to protect the poor and low-income earners from price shock and bring stability to the rice market.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

67 hurt as AL, police clash with BNP

STAR REPORT

Sixty-seven people, including seven policemen, were injured as the BNP men clashed with the Awami League activists and police in three districts yesterday.

The clashes took place at the BNP's programmes protesting the price hike of daily essentials and fuel. The party has been protesting across the country since August 22.

In Netrakona, some 20 people, including three policemen, were injured when the law enforcers tried to quell a clash between the AL and the BNP in Madan upazila yesterday.

The BNP men gathered on Shahpur Eidgah ground at noon. On information, the AL men also went there and the groups started hurling brickbats at each other, said police.

Police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control, said Mohammad Ferdous Alam, officer-in-charge of Madan Police Station.

Additional policemen have been deployed to avert any further untoward incident, he said, adding a case would be filed in connection with the clash.

In Pirojpur, at least 25 BNP men were injured as the Chhatra League men attacked them in Nesarabad upazila yesterday morning.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



Pedestrians grabbing hold of a blind man who was about to fall over in his attempt to get on a bus that did not come to a complete stop to pick up passengers. Competing with other buses for passengers, drivers often pick up people by merely slowing down, which makes it nearly impossible for those with disabilities to get on without risking injury. The photo was taken in the capital's Farmgate yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Gorbachev, last Soviet leader, dies at 91

AFP, Moscow

The death of Mikhail Gorbachev triggered an outpouring of tributes from Western leaders yesterday but reaction was muted in Russia, where many blamed the last Soviet leader for the loss of the country's status as a global superpower.

Gorbachev, who changed the course of history by triggering the demise of the Soviet Union and was one of the great figures of the 20th century, died on Tuesday aged 91.

Russian news agency reports said he had died in a central Moscow hospital "after a serious and long illness".

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5