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'Killing rivers in the name of balu mahal'



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Italy steps into unknown with far-right win



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'We had to change people's perspectives'



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ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES

Price rise for global hike not justified

Finds an investigation by an intelligence agency

SUKANTA HALDER and MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Whenever the price of a commodity increases in the local market, the traders and wholesalers have the readymade excuse of a price hike in the international market. But a recent study by an intelligence agency found their justification to be unsubstantiated.

The investigation, which studied the price movement of commodities in local and international markets over a 12 month period from August last year, found that the price increases in the local market were disproportionate to their rise abroad.

And in many cases, when the prices dropped, the converse happened, found the study.

The Daily Star has a copy of the report, which was commissioned to get to the bottom of the random price hikes of commodities over the past year or so. This has fuelled inflation and prompted the poor and the low-income group to cut back on their food intake.

Last fiscal year, average inflation accelerated to 6.2 percent from 5.6 percent in fiscal 2020-21 -- well above the revised target of 5.7 percent.

And according to the Asian Development Bank's projections, inflation will average 6.5 percent this fiscal year, overshooting the target of 5.6 percent.

The intelligence agency's report indicates that the elevated inflation was not entirely due to the supply disruptions caused by the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine; the traders and wholesalers exploited the situation.

Take the cases of lentils, onions, and sugar, whose prices have plummeted in the international market but increased in Bangladesh.

The prices of pulses increased by 29 to 39 percent in the local market but they dropped 14 percent in the world market on average, the study found.

Similarly, the key cooking ingredient onion's price edged up 9 percent when it became about 28 percent cheaper in the global market in that period.

When sugar price declined about 11 percent, it increased by about 15 percent at home.

There are cases in which the price increase at home was always by a much larger percentage than that of abroad.

Take the case of wheat, whose price increased 67 percent year-on-year in August at home. In that period, its price increased by just 8 percent abroad.

The price of the staple rice increased by about 7 percent in the global market but at home, it increased by 10 to 19 percent depending on the quality.

Though the report did not mention any foul play or

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BIG DISCREPANCY IN COMMODITY PRICE MOVEMENTS AT HOME AND ABROAD

	WORLD MARKET	LOCAL MARKET
Wheat	8%	67%
Rice	7.21%	19%
Lentil	-13.71%	39%
Onion	-27.71%	9.20%
Sugar	-10.78%	14.84%



A woman in tears in Mareya village of Panchagarh's Boda upazila as she looks for her two relatives who have been missing since Sunday's boat capsized in the Karatoa. Locals in Mareya recovered several bodies yesterday.

PHOTO: MD QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT

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A family that was rejoicing now numb with grief

MD QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT

Hari Kishore Roy's family was preparing for the Durga Puja with unbound zest and excitement.

However, the festivities descended into tragedy when a trawler, carrying six of the family members, among many others, capsized on the Karatoa in Panchagarh's Boda upazila on Sunday.

Hari Kishore, 45, his wife Konika Rani, 38, younger sister Parul Rani, 40, father-in-law Sorendranath Roy, 70, sister-in-law Monika Roy, 28, and another relative Nikhil Chandra Barman, 60, were on the boat.

After the capsizing, the bodies of Kanika and Parul were recovered, but the others were still missing as of filing the report at 1:00am today.

This correspondent

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PANCHAGARH BOAT CAPSIZE

Death toll now 50

30 people still missing, rescue operation resumes today

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT and KONGKON KARMAKER

Twenty-six more bodies were recovered yesterday, taking the death toll from Sunday's boat capsizing in Panchagarh to 50, and rescuers fear the number may increase further as over 30 persons were missing.

The air was heavy with grief as relatives of the missing crowded the bank of the Karatoa river.

Dipankar Roy, additional deputy commissioner and also convener of the probe body formed by the district administration, confirmed the death toll from the control room at Mareya union parishad.

There were 25 women and 13 children among the victims, most of whom were Hindu devotees going to the Bodeshwari Temple to take part in rituals centring Mahalaya.

The bodies were recovered from the river at different places in Boda and Debiganj upazilas in Panchagarh, and Dinajpur's Birganj and Khansama upazilas as the current carried bodies 25km from the spot in Mareya union's Awalia ghat in Boda.

Abdul Lotif, a local in Khansama upazila, said he saw floating bodies after the tragedy in Panchagarh. Divers from Rajshahi, Rangpur and Kurigram were conducting rescue

operations at different places from Awalia ghat to Khansama.

Raghunath Chandra Roy of Boda upazila said his sister-in-law and 12-year-old nephew remain missing since the boat capsized. "We had been searching for them since the incident on Sunday," he said.

Getting information of body recovery in Basulia village in Khansama, he along with his relatives went there and found the body of his sister-in-law but not the 12-year-old child.

On Sunday afternoon, the boat carrying more than 100 people capsized a short time after leaving Awalia ghat. Witnesses and survivors said on the day that the boat had the capacity to carry only 50.

Dipak Kumar Roy, 35, of Sakoya Bazar in Boda upazila who was looking for his mother, said the death toll could have been less had the firefighters taken immediate steps following the boat capsizing.

Al Amin, a survivor, said the boat was overloaded and it capsized within a few minutes.

Mareya Union Parishad Chairman Abu Ansar Md Razaul Karim Shamim, who was present at the spot during the incident, told The Daily Star that police and firefighters were present there since morning.

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EVM FINGERPRINT MISMATCH

EC plans legal cover to let 1pc voters vote

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission plans to empower the election officials to allow up to 1 percent of the voters in a polling booth to cast votes through EVMs if their fingerprints don't match with biometrics data stored in the EC server.

It has already drafted a proposal for including in the Representation of the People Order (RPO) a provision to that end.

At present, the commission issues circulars mandating presiding officers and assistant presiding officer to exercise this authority.

The proposed amendment to the RPO, if passed, will give a legal basis to the practice.

There have been allegations that election officials sometimes misuse this authority and allows even up to 25 percent voters in a polling booth to cast votes in cases of fingerprint mismatch.

In the recent local body elections where EVMs were used, many voters complained that biometrics could not read their fingerprints.

According to EC officials, this can happen if one's fingers get damaged either

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Japan may give \$600-700m in budget support

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh can expect budget support of \$600-700 million from Japan as the development partner has responded positively to the country's request for financial assistance to help the economy weather the storm caused by the Ukraine war.

The disclosure was made by Planning Minister MA Mannan following a meeting yesterday with the outgoing and incoming chief representatives of the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

Both the top Jica officials were positive about the proposal for budget support, he said, adding that the Economic Relations Division is holding talks over the matter.

Jica provided Bangladesh with \$620 million in total in the past two fiscal years to help

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BNP men, carrying bamboo sticks, take position in front of a police barricade near ZH Sikder Women's Medical College Hospital in the capital's Hazaribagh yesterday afternoon. The opposition party held a rally there protesting the price hike of essentials. BNP and Awami League men chased and counter-chased each other on the Tally Office Road after the ruling party activists tried to obstruct the opposition men from joining the protests. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

BCL expels Eden accusers instead
No probe yet into allegations against unit president, general secretary

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU and SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

Chhatra League yesterday expelled 17 leaders and activists of its Eden Mohila College unit for their alleged involvement in anti-disciplinary activities.

Among the 17 are students who had brought some serious allegations against Tamanna Jasmine Riva and Razia Sultana, president and general secretary of the college unit BCL.

The central committee of Bangladesh Chhatra League, however, didn't take any step to investigate the allegations, including blackmailing students into carrying out unethical activities, hall seat trading, extortion, and torture.

Riva on August 23 allegedly tortured two students in a dormitory after confining them to a room for six and a half hours. She threatened them that a video of them would be recorded and released online for allegedly circulating an audio clip.

In the audio clip, the BCL leader was heard hurling abuses and threatening some students for not attending a BCL programme. Riva later offered an apology after the audio clip went viral on social media.

The central unit of the pro-Awami League students' front did not issue any show cause notice to Riva.

Yesterday, 12 of the expelled Eden BCL leaders and activists went to the AL president's Dhanmondi office to observe a hunger strike, protesting their expulsion. But they could not do so due to "huge pressure" on them.

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