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Refiners slash soybean oil prices by Tk 14

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Refiners yesterday slashed retail prices of soybean oil by Tk 14 a litre as its prices in the international market dropped and the government kept the reduced Value Added Tax (VAT) on it.

The new prices will be effective from today, said Bangladesh Vegetable Oil Refiners' and Vanaspati Manufacturers' Association in a press release.

As per the announcement, refiners will sell each litre of bottled soybean oil at Tk 178, down from Tk 192. Retail prices of a five-litre container will be Tk 880, down from the previous rate of Tk 945.

This development came after top brass of three large commodity importers and processors -- City Group, Meghna Group of Industries and TK Group -- met PM's Adviser on Private Sector Affairs Salman F Rahman and Senior Secretary at the PMO Tofazzel Hossain Miah to share their concerns for high cost of dollars and complexities in opening letters of credits for imports.

City Group Chairman Fazlur Rahman, MGI Chairman Mostafa Kamal and TK Group Managing Director Mohammad Mustafa Haider attended the meeting.

"We have cut prices as the government promises to extend 5 percent VAT on edible oil. A decline in soybean oil prices in the international market is another reason," said Biswajit Saha, director for corporate and regulatory affairs of City Group.

Globally, prices of soybean oil, which was \$1,752 a tonne in June this year, fell to \$1,599 a tonne in August.

Soybean prices also dropped to \$671 a tonne in August

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Kumari Puja, observed during the Maha Ashtami, in Shri Shri Govinda temple in Chattogram's Kotwali yesterday. It was celebrated full-throttle this year, after a two-year hiatus due to Covid restrictions. The Kumari Puja is an essential part of Durga Puja, during which an unmarried adolescent girl is worshipped symbolically as a goddess.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

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RESEARCH ON EVOLUTION

Sweden's Paabo wins Nobel Prize in Medicine

REUTERS, Stockholm

Swedish geneticist Svante Paabo yesterday won the 2022 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for discoveries that underpin our understanding of how modern day humans evolved from extinct ancestors.

Paabo, director at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, won the prize for "discoveries concerning the genomes of extinct hominins and human evolution," the Award committee said.

Paabo was "overwhelmed" and "very happy," said Thomas Perlmann, secretary for the Nobel Committee for Physiology or Medicine, after calling the scientist with the news.

Paabo, 67, said he thought the call from Sweden was something to do his summer house there.

"So I was just gulping down the last cup of tea to go and pick up my daughter at her nanny where she has had an overnight stay," Paabo said in an audio recording posted on the Nobel website.

"And then I got this call from Sweden and I of course thought it had something to do with our little summer house in Sweden ... I thought the lawn mower had broken down or something."

Asked if he thought he would get the award, he

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FINGERPRINT MISMATCH

EC to propose amendment to RPO soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission has finalised the proposal for empowering the election officials to allow up to 1 percent of voters in a polling booth to cast votes through EVMs if their fingerprints do not match with biometrics data stored in the EC server.

The EC will send the proposal to the law ministry very soon so that the process to amend the Representation of the People Order (RPO) could start, Election Commissioner Md Alamgir told reporters at his EC office yesterday.

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

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A local Jubo League leader has set up fences, using bamboo and nets, in two adjacent canals in Bagerhat's Morrelganj upazila to obstruct the flow of water for fish farming.

PHOTO: STAR

LITERACY RATE

5 districts fall far behind the rest

Officials blame poverty, lack of continuous measures

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The literacy rates in Jamalpur, Sherpur, Bandarban, Sunamganj and Kurigram are significantly lower than the country's average.

According to data from the preliminary Population and Housing Census 2022 report, Bangladesh's average literacy rate among those aged seven and above is 74.66 percent. This shows an increase by 22.89 percent since the previous census conducted in 2011, in which the literacy rate stood at 51.77 percent.

However, the aforementioned five districts have the lowest rates this time.

Jamalpur's literacy rate was 61.52 percent -- 13.13 percent lower than the national average.

Meanwhile, 63.57 percent of the people in Sherpur, 63.64 percent in Bandarban, 64.77 percent in Sunamganj, and 64.99 percent in Kurigram cannot read or write.

Officials of the Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE) working

in these districts cited a host of factors owing to the staggeringly low literacy rates.

Those factors include extreme poverty, a lack of awareness and also an absence of district-wide literacy projects, as well as continuous efforts to continue those.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics said literacy is defined as the ability to read and write in any language.

Kazi Saifuzzaman, additional director of Jamalpur BNFE, said it was true that the district's literacy rate was much lower than that in other districts.

"We have a lot of char areas, and poverty there is the main reason for the low literacy rate. Most of the guardians are not educated, and many of them do not show interest in sending their children to schools.

"On the other hand, adults are also reluctant to join adult literacy programmes due to poverty. Parents instead send their children to farms for agricultural work."

Other BNFE officials too blamed the absence of continuous efforts

for adult literacy programmes in these districts.

Manzur Ahmed, additional director of Bandarban BNFE, said the Basic Literacy Project, aimed at providing basic education to 7,000 people aged between 15 and 45, is currently in the implementation stage in his district.

"Before this, we didn't have any literacy project initiative for many years. We need continuous projects for the improving literacy rate."

While there are five upazilas in Jamalpur, the BNFE is currently implementing the "Out of School Children Programme as Second Chance Education", to provide non-formal education, in only Jhenaigati and Sherpur Sadar upazilas to 4,200 children aged 8-14.

"It would have been great if we had been able to cover the three other upazilas -- Nakla, Nalitabari and Sreebardi," said Syed Moktar Hossain, additional director of Sherpur BNFE.

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Never-before-seen Beatles footage released in Japan

AFP, Tokyo



Beatles fans have hailed the release of never-before-seen footage showing the Fab Four on tour in Japan, following a fierce court battle over the 35-minute video.

The silent black-and-white footage of the British band's only visit to the country in 1966 was recorded by police as a security measure.

It shows the musicians descending from a plane in matching kimonos and performing to a rapturous crowd at the Budokan arena in Tokyo, as well as behind-the-scenes police operations.

The footage has a noticeable quirk, however: the faces of everyone except the Beatles -- from crying admirers to officers facing off with right-wingers protesting the tour -- have been pixelated for privacy reasons.

This had been a key sticking point for fans and freedom-of-information advocates, who fought a long and winding battle demanding that the footage remain uncensored.

They took their case all the way to Japan's Supreme Court, arguing that the video was a "historical document" and pleading for authorities to simply let it be.

Canals grabbed for fish farming

Jubo League leader blocks canals for his business

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

A local influential ruling party leader has grabbed two canals in Morrelganj upazila and has been fish farming there obstructing the natural water flow.

Moreover, people on both sides of the two canals are not being allowed to catch fish or use the water.

Arif Mallik, general secretary of Daibaggahati union unit Jubo League, has grabbed parts of Badiarjan and Petnikhali canals, depriving farmers of irrigation water too.

Locals said they have submitted written complaints to the District Commissioner's (DC) Office on several occasions to free the two canals from illegal occupation, but the canals have not been recovered.

Petnikhali and Badiarjan canals flow through Ghazirghat, Mitradanga, Hamchapur and Chapari areas and unite with Herma, one of the largest canals in Morrelganj.

Arif has set up current nets and fences on about one and a half kilometres of the two canals, stretching from Gazirghat to Uttarghazi Government Primary School. He is using parts as fish enclosures.

Due to disruption of the water flow, paddy cultivation on hundreds of bighas of land has been affected.

The fencing has been causing flooding too.

Bagerhat DC Office sources said Mohammad Azhar Ali Sheikh, a retired primary schoolteacher, had submitted letters on April 24, June 15 and July 6 this year to free the two canals from illegal occupations.

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