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LOW-INCOME PEOPLE

Decent meal a luxury this Ramadan

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Taking Tk 300 from her rickshaw-puller husband, Moni Begum went to Mirpur-II kitchen market in the capital yesterday in the hope of buying some good food for her three children to eat on the first day of Ramadan.

But her heart sank as she entered the market and found that the prices of groceries and other essential items have already increased.

Since she cannot afford to buy a whole chicken, she bought 250-gram dressed chicken at Tk 110, 1 kg potato at Tk 20 and 250 ml oil at Tk 30.

"I will store the chicken in a neighbour's fridge and cook it on the first day of Ramadan. My children will like it because we only ate vegetables and dal [lentil] throughout the month," said Moni, who earns Tk 4,000 by cleaning the stairway of a five-story building in her neighbourhood.

Her husband Ibrahim earns Tk 600 to Tk 700 a day. But the two of them struggle to make ends meet after paying the rent and for the schooling of their three children.

"Buying beef, fish, milk and fruits is out of the question with our earnings," she said, adding that she has already been compromising on the quantity and quality of food.

But putting food on the table will be a challenge during Ramadan.

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PRICES NOW AND A YEAR AGO

Item	2023 Price (Tk)	2022 Price (Tk)
CHICKPEA (PER KG)	TK 85-90	Tk 70-75
SUGAR (PER KG)	TK 120	Tk 80
BROILER CHICKEN (PER KG)	TK 250-270	Tk 155-165
EGG (4 PIECES)	TK 45-47	Tk 36-38
LENTIL (PER KG)	TK 136	Tk 115

PRICE MANIPULATION

3 laws there, but not much enforcement

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

There are at least three laws and as many government bodies to protect the consumers from price manipulation, but it goes on unabated due to lax enforcement of the laws and a lack of coordination among the government organisations, say commodity experts.

According to them, unscrupulous businesspeople have been making extra profits over the years at the expense of consumers. This becomes more evident ahead of and during Ramadan and Eid, and after any minor disruption to the supply chain.

The Control of Essential Commodities Act-1956, Consumers' Right Protection Act-2009, and Agricultural Marketing Act-2018 are there to check abnormal price hikes and punish the violators.

The Directorate General of Food, the Directorate of National Consumers Right Protection and the Department of Agriculture Marketing (DAM) are responsible for enforcing those laws.

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PM to visit US in April on WB president's invite

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to travel to Washington DC towards the end of next month to celebrate 50 years of partnership between Bangladesh and the World Bank.

"We are very happy that Honourable Prime Minister, HE Sheikh Hasina has graciously accepted the invitation from the World Bank Group President David Malpass to join to commemorate the 50 years of partnership between Bangladesh and the World Bank," Abdoulaye Seck, World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh and Bhutan, told The Daily Star.

The event will take place at the World Bank headquarters in Washington DC on May 1.

"Earlier, in January, we jointly organised an event in Dhaka with the Ministry of Finance to celebrate the partnership that improved the lives of millions of Bangladeshi people," Seck added.

Before heading to the US, the PM would be flying to Japan. Hasina was scheduled to visit Japan, Bangladesh's largest bilateral donor, from November 29 to December 1 last year but the tour was postponed.

Over at Washington DC, the WB would be showcasing

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Elite Paint imports 'Product of Bangladesh' from India

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Elite Paint, one of the oldest decorative paint manufacturers in the country, brought in about three and a half tonnes of finished paint from India in cans with the 'Product of Bangladesh' stamp – a move that violates the customs act and country-of-origin rules.

The shipment worth Tk 25 lakh came from Soujanya Color in India, and Elite Paint's subsidiary Elite International, a clearing and forwarding agent, is responsible for releasing the consignment from the port.

But the Chattogram Custom House officials seized the 3,000 Elite Paint branded plastic containers, which contained 16 shades of decorative paint, earlier this month for violating multiple rules.

Elite Paints, which was founded in 1952, said the consignment contained raw materials, which would have fetched the Chattogram-based company industrial benefits as well as a waiver advance tax payment.

The benefits do not apply to imported finished goods, according to customs officials.

About 35 percent duty has to be paid for imported finished paint.

Besides, Elite Paint cannot import any finished goods since it is an industrial company. If it does, it will be treated as a commercial product and it will not get any



industrial benefit in importing and selling the product in the country.

Furthermore, as per the country-of-origin rules, it is illegal to import finished products and claim those as manufactured locally.

As per Section 15 of the Customs Act 1969, such goods can be confiscated, while Section 156 (1) and (9) permit imposing a double fine on the value of the product.

All types of imported goods must have the name of the country of manufacture and exporters

must provide a certificate name as "country of origin" to prove where the product was made.

The "country of origin" name has to be mentioned in all import documents including the bank's letter of credit, packaging list, shipping documents and customs documents.

Due to the violations of customs law, there is no scope to release the consignment, said customs officials informed on the matter.

All import documents of Elite Paint's consignment showed that the product origin is India but 'Product of Bangladesh' is written on the containers.

Were the consignment released by the customs, the paint cans, which weigh a kilogram each and have usage instructions in both Bengali and English, can be sold in the market without any change.

According to the physical report of the consignment, the cans have the manufacturing and expiry dates and Elite Paint factory's address of 92 Baizid Bostami Road, Nasirabad Industrial Area, Chattogram.

An explanation has been sought from the importer regarding the

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2018 COP MURDER Rabiul linked in every way

Finds police probe

SHARIFUL ISLAM, CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI



Though Rabiul Islam alias Arav Khan on a recent Facebook live claimed that he was not involved in the 2018 killing of a cop, the police probe report made some shocking revelations regarding his complicity.

Rabiul rented the Banani flat where Special Branch Inspector Mamun Emran Khan was beaten to death by some of his cohorts on July 8, 2018. At the time of the murder, he was not there.

But once informed that Mamun was no more, he instructed one of his aides over the phone to confirm the cop's death by cutting a leg to see if blood spurts from the wound.

Rabiul and some of his associates then dumped the body in Gazipur. They burnt the body after pouring petrol on it so that it could not be recognised.

All this horrific information came up in the confession of Rahmat Ullah, an accused in the murder case, and a police probe report submitted before a Dhaka court.

Rabiul, who now runs a jewellery shop in Dubai, came under the spotlight after he invited cricketer Shakib Al Hasan to open the store on March 15.

In the Facebook live, he said the flat was the office of his business firm "Apan Builders". The police officer was

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Train hits bus at Malibagh crossing

Rail link snapped for two hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rail communications between Dhaka and other districts were disrupted for almost two hours after a train hit a bus at the capital's Malibagh level crossing around 9:10pm yesterday.

The incident caused only minor injuries to three people as the Panchagarh-bound train significantly reduced its speed before the collision.

Besides, the Shohagh Paribahan bus, which was taking an U-turn, had only the driver, an assistant and an elderly woman on board.

Faruk Talukder Sohel, owner of Shohagh Paribahan, said the train hit the rear-right side of the bus, which was on the level crossing as the bar was not lowered at the time.

Abdul Gani, a shopkeeper near the level crossing, said there were several vehicles on the tracks when the



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

A bus stuck on the rail lines at Malibagh level-crossing after the train hit it and dragged it along for almost 100 feet last night. The DIT road remained blocked and rail communications between Dhaka and other districts were disrupted for almost two hours after the accident.

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Ready for talks with BNP but not on caretaker govt

AL tells Peter Haas

STAR REPORT

The ruling Awami League yesterday told US Ambassador Peter Haas that it was ready for talks with the BNP but not regarding a caretaker government, which the opposition party wants as the polls time administration.

"The US ambassador wanted to know if we will hold dialogues with the opposition. We said we are ready ... but we cannot do anything beyond the constitution when it comes to the election," said an AL source present at the meeting with Haas at his residence.

The ambassador held the luncheon meeting with an AL delegation, led by the party's General Secretary Obaidul Quader.

Col (retired) Faruk Khan, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on foreign affairs; Dr Shammii Ahmed, the party's international affairs secretary; Dr Salim Mahmud, its information and research secretary; Mohammad A Arafat, member of AL central committee, and Biplab Barua, the party's office secretary, were also present.

After the meeting with the US envoy, Quader took part in a discussion organised by Chhatra League at Dhaka University's TSC yesterday. There, he said, "We told the American ambassador that it is not possible for a caretaker government to return."

Contacted, US Embassy Spokesperson Bryan Schiller said they discussed free and fair elections in Bangladesh and the range of important work shared by the two countries – from trade and people-to-people ties to security cooperation.

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