



SUBSIDISED MEAT, EGGS Relief to some of middle class

DIPAN NANDY

MA Khair Chowdhury passed the Segunbagicha kitchen market disappointed.

"It's quite impossible to buy daily essentials from the market due to the high prices."

He walked a few steps and then, in front of Segun Restora, heard about a van of the Department of Livestock parked nearby. He rushed to the spot and bought 1 kg beef and a dozen eggs from the refrigerated van.

He said, "I heard about these vans meant to provide goods to people with low incomes."

However, even those who seemed to have higher incomes were buying products from the van, because of the price hikes of the daily commodities, Khair said.

On the first day of Ramadan, the Department of Livestock started selling products at reasonable prices at 20 places in the capital. Beef can be purchased at Tk 640 a kg, mutton at Tk 940 a kg, dressed broiler at Tk 340 a kg, milk at Tk 80 a litre, and egg at

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5



Boatloads of watermelons arrive in the capital from Barishal, Patuakhali, and Khulna. Farmers sell the popular summer fruit for Tk 8 to 10 per kg. But, the price rises to Tk 40 to 60 per kg when they reach the city. The photo was taken from Badamatoli Ghat on the banks of the Buriganga yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

RAGGING IN IU They're too afraid to speak up

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Starting university is always a very exciting and important step in a student's life. But Mahmud (not his real name) remembers his initial days on the campus for all the wrong reasons.

Soon after he joined the Islamic University campus in Kushtia in 2018, he was ragged several times by seniors, mostly belonging to Chhatra League. This instilled a sense of fear in him.

"They took me to the roof of a dormitory and forced me to smoke. They asked me whether I smoke weed. At one stage, a senior started throwing a ball and I had to dive to catch it. They made sure that I was only wearing underwear," said the IU student of the 2017-18 session.

"At one stage, a senior started throwing a ball and I had to dive to catch it. They made sure that I was only wearing underwear."

An IU student

He alleged that the seniors used to insult the freshers in front of fellow students even for the slightest mistakes.

"Sometimes they would order the newcomers to dance or sing. If anyone refused to comply, the seniors would slap the fresher's face."

The victims, however, didn't dare to inform the university authorities about the harassment fearing reprisal.

Mahmud's harassment is not a single case as such abuse of freshers at the hands of seniors still goes on at the public university. Two dozen more students alleged that most of the freshers face such ragging.

They shared with The Daily Star their bad experiences in the wake of the torture of their fellow first-year student Phulpori Khatun on the night of February 12.

Phulpori on February 14 wrote to the IU authorities alleging that Chhatra League leader Sanjida

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2

BHANGA-BENAPOLE HIGHWAY EXPANSION

Funding snag holds off project

Planning Commission calls meeting

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

A problem over funding the expansion of the Bhangra-Jashore-Benapole highway project is raising concerns that the work of the much-needed project may take more time to kick off.

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) has submitted a Development Project Proposal (DPP) to the Planning Commission, saying that it would require Tk 13,834.11 crore for the project.

Out of the total, Tk 11,082.52 crore (\$1,056 million) is expected to come from Indian lines of credit (LoC), as per the proposal.

But Indian authorities, so far, have only given "preliminary consent" to \$100 million for the project, shows a planning ministry document.

Given the situation, the Planning Commission has called a meeting tomorrow (Monday). Top officials from the Economic Relations Division (ERD), which mobilises external resources for development projects; Road Transport and Highways Division; and the RHD are expected to join the meeting, sources said.

RHD's Chief Engineer Md Ishaque yesterday told this correspondent that the meeting has been scheduled but did not give details.

The country is failing to reap the maximum benefits of the enhanced connectivity after the opening of the Padma and Madhumati bridges last year as the road from Faridpur's Bhangra to Jashore's Benapole is still not ready for increased vehicular movement.

A plan for turning the two-lane

Bhangra-Benapole road into a four-lane highway was chalked out long ago but it saw little progress, mainly due to the uncertainty over funding, officials said.

RHD has prepared two separate DPPs – one for acquiring land and relocating utility lines while another for physical work for expanding the road.

The estimated cost for land acquisition and utility relocation is Tk 4,236.60 crore. The commission has already held meeting over the land acquisition project's DPP early this month and asked the RHD to recast it, sources said.

On the other hand, the RHD first submitted a DPP for turning the 129.17km highway into a four-lane one with service roads on both sides at a cost of Tk 11,050.04 crore. But it has to recast the DPP, after the RHD rate schedule-2022 came into force, taking the estimated cost of the project to Tk 13,841.11 crore.

So, the total cost of the road's expansion would be Tk 18,077.71 crore – making it the costliest RHD project.

WHY SO IMPORTANT?

The opening of the long cherished Padma Bridge in June last year created a direct link between the capital and the country's southwestern region, cutting the travel time significantly. The bridge is also a key component of the Asian Highway-1, which is expected to boost the economic growth of Asia and improve the country's standing in the continent.

The AH-1, connecting Meghalaya with West Bengal of India via Tamabil-Sylhet-Dhaka-Narail-Jashore, had two

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5

Cancer cells to be sent to space for research



INDEPENDENT ONLINE

Cancer cells will be heading to space as part of UK scientific experiments to understand more about an incurable childhood tumour.

Researchers from The Institute of Cancer Research are sending samples of diffuse midline glioma to the International Space Station (ISS) to see how it spreads in microgravity.

The scientists said their study – dubbed D(MG)2 – could pave the way to understanding more about the disease that led to the death of Karen Armstrong, the daughter of late US astronaut Neil Armstrong.

Chris Jones, leader of the D(MG)2 study and professor of Childhood Cancer Biology at the Institute of Cancer Research in London, said: "Unfortunately, survival rates for patients with diffuse midline glioma have not changed substantially since Neil Armstrong's daughter died

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

Driver killed, left inside SUV

STAR REPORT

Police yesterday recovered the body of a driver from inside an SUV on the bank of the Padma in Kushtia's Kumarkhali, and a woman admitted to killing him with her husband over an affair.

Samrat Hossain, 29, chauffeur for a high official of a contractor of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, was a resident of Alhaz Camp village under Pabna's Ishwardi upazila. He was last seen alive on Thursday, police said.



In primary interrogation, Seema Khatun told officers that she and her husband Abdul Momin had killed Samrat by hitting him in the head with a hammer, said Arbinda Sarkar, officer-in-charge of Ishwardi Police Station.

Police first went to Momin and Seema's home in Basherbada area of Ishwardi yesterday morning after a vehicle rental company reported a missing SUV and a driver, he said, adding that officers learnt that Samrat's last known location was that house.

Police found only Seema at home and detained her early in the morning.

Later in the day, Masud Alom, additional superintendent of police in Pabna, said, "Seema admitted to killing Samrat with her husband at her home around 10:00pm on Thursday."

"Seema's husband Momin is also a driver by profession. After the killing, the couple put the body in a sack and took it to the vehicle. Then, they drove for around 30 kilometres and left the vehicle on the bank of Padma."

It seems the motive behind the murder is an affair, he said, adding that police are looking for Seema's husband Momin.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

Modi scared of my speech on Adani

Says Rahul Gandhi as he vows to keep fighting after removal from parliament

AFP, New Delhi

Top Indian opposition figure Rahul Gandhi yesterday said he would keep fighting for democracy after blaming his expulsion from parliament on his demands for a probe into a key business ally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Gandhi, 52, was stripped of his parliamentary seat on Friday, a day after he was convicted of defamation in Modi's home state of Gujarat for a 2019 campaign-trail remark seen as an insult to the premier.

Modi's government has been widely accused by political opponents and rights groups of using the law to target and silence critics, but Gandhi said he

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4



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