Soybean oil price cut by Tk 10 a litre

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hours after a meeting with the commerce ministry, Bangladesh Vegetable Oil Refiners' and Vanaspati Manufacturers' Association yesterday reduced the price of soybean oil by Tk 10 per litre.

The new price of loose soybean oil is Tk 167 and packet soyabean oil is Tk $\,$

Meanwhile, the price of palm oil was reduced by Tk 2 per litre, to Tk

The price reduction will come into effect "within a few days", said Tapan Kanti Ghosh, senior secretary to the commerce ministry yesterday.

He made the comment at a press briefing after a meeting of a task force on the analysis of the market



situation and commodity prices at the Secretariat.

"As the price of edible oil is downward in the international market, we will sit again after 15 days to find out if the prices of soybean and palm oil could be reduced further," he said.

Multiple issues were discussed in the meeting, including the prices of soybean oil, onion, ginger and garlic. There was a discussion on the current import situation too, said Tapan.

"We have already reduced the price of onion after the decision to allow imports," he said.

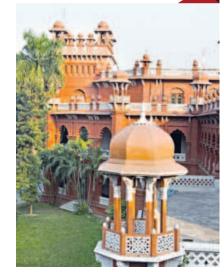
There is a shortage in the supply of ginger as China has stopped exporting the product. As a result, its price shot up in the local market, he said, adding that there was a shortfall in imports of wheat and sugar too.

The sugar price has become stable in the international market. "We hope that it will not increase further. If it does not increase, we will be able to reduce sugar prices," he said.

Asked, Tapan said the price reduction in the international market is not reflected in the local market immediately because of various factors including dollar price, tax rate and fixation of inland transportation

The metropolis boasts a historically significant past, and that past has left several fascinating footprints to explore like temples, churches, and mosques along with the architecture of the Mughal and Colonial periods. This is all well known. However, modern Dhaka can be an equally exciting tour.











DHAKA

a potential tourist destination?

RBR

"Dhaka is a vibrant and interesting tourist destination," says Rahnuma Khan, deputy director, Salam Bangladesh Tourism Board, with conviction.

There are two distinct sides to the city; one making of the modern contemporary metropolis and the other is the crowded but lively Old

Interested in the Mughal or Colonial periods, tourists can visit Ahsan Manzil, Curzon Hall, or Lalbagh Fort.

The Dhakeshwari National Temple is a beautiful structure that is a mustsee during "arti" or offerings at dusks when the beats of the drums and the tinkling bell by the "purohit" or priest make a fascinating picture.

The Armenian Church is another wonderful testimony to the existence of a significant Armenian community in this region in the 17th and 18th centuries. Antiquated and revered, the church makes for an interesting visit for its old gravestones, simple garden, and spiral staircase.

"People who are interested in the history of Bangladesh's independence only have to visit the Liberation War Museum at Agargaon to know in detail how we gained our liberation. The Central Shaheed Minar tells the strong story of how we fought for our mother language. The Swadhinata Stambha, the monuments around the Dhaka University area, and also our grand Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban pulls touristy crowds. The Bangabandhu Museum

and Martyred Intellectuals Memorial is a must-visit to delve deep into our culture.



interesting cultural life with plays, theatres, and concerts taking place regularly during weekends. Our shopping arcades are full of ethnic wear, and specialised stores that carry our heritage weaves in local slow

fashion options," says Rahnuma. Culinary tourism in Dhaka is also an exciting possibility. There are numerous places to eat in Dhaka and each one surpasses the other in specialities. The options are aplenty -- dishes like kebabs and biriyanis; chaaps, soups, momos in Mohammadpur street side shops; a typical Bengali dish with fish curry, vegetables, and dal; the list can go on.

For any tourist trying our regional specials, Mejban beef of Chattogram or beef with chui jhal of Khulna is also a must if they can brave the hot spices.

"I must insist to taste local sweets like rosogolla and misti doi. Our roadside milk tea is a delight in Dhaka city. The street foods are delicious too; a crispy phuchka with a touch of tamarind sauce or a plate of chotpoti or chickpea stew are all must-dos in Dhaka," she Dhaka has the potential to become

an attractive tourist destination. Despite having all the necessary things that are needed to attract travellers, the city has failed to appeal to an international audience. The reason for this is perhaps that the presentation of these resources in an attractive manner remains a challenge.

In recent times Dhaka has seen a surge of foreign visitors who come here for various reasons. The number will only increase in the near future. We need to take wholehearted attempts to present ourselves in the most touristfriendly manner and that will possibly create enough interest in the city as a travel destination.

N'ganj oil tanker blast death toll rises to three

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

The death toll from the oil tanker blast in Narayanganj's Shitalakkhya river last week rose to three after another worker succumbed to his injuries early yesterday.

The dead is Rubel, 38, of Phulbagicha village in Bhola's Lalmohan upazila.

He died while undergoing treatment at the Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery at 1:00am yesterday.

Tariqul İslam, resident surgeon of the institute, said Rubel suffered 45 percent burns.

Eight people were injured in an oil tanker explosion in the Shitalakkhya river at Narayanganj's Rupganj on June 4.

Schools reopen after closure over heatwave

STAR REPORT

All primary and secondary schools and madrasas that were closed due to the recent heatwave

The Department of Secondary and Higher Education earlier said all classes would start from yesterday, but all educational institutions would have to follow some directives, reports a Bangla daily.

Because of the recent heatwave, teaching at all government primary schools stopped between June 5 and 8.

After this, madrasas too were kept closed between June 6 and 8. Secondary schools were kept closed only on June 8.

Trucker held over crash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab vesterday arrested the driver of the truck that collided with a pickup van in Sylhet's Dakshin Surma upazila on June 7 and killed 15 construction

Shafiqul Islam, 27, of Sherpur's Moksedpur village, was arrested from Patuakhali district, said Senior ASP Afsan-al-Alam, media officer of Rab-9.

On June 7, a pickup truck carrying 28 construction workers collided head-on with a Sylhet-bound truck at Qutubpur area in Dakshin Surma around 5:00am.

A case was filed with Dakshin Surma Police Station accusing the unnamed truck and pickup drivers under the Road Transport Act the same day.

Bodies of 2 college students recovered from Padma

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Fire Service and Civil Defence personnel recovered the bodies of two college students from the Padma in Rajshahi yesterday after they went missing in the river a day before.

The dead are Sarwar Saim, 17, and Riyat Khandaker Ghalib, 17, said officials of Rajshahi fire department.

Wahedul Islam, deputy director of Rajshahi's Fire Service and Civil Defence, said Sarwar's body was spotted by local boatmen in the river at Sreerampur T-Band area.

On information, divers later recovered the body around 6:00am.

Meanwhile, Riyat's body was found lying on the river bed, some 20 yards away from the spot from where they went missing, said Abdur Rouf, senior station officer of Rajshahi's Fire Service and Civi

Govt at last springs into action deposit for opening letters of credit for and edible oil for the sake of reining in inflation.

disproportionately higher than that in the global market or found to have gone in the opposite direction in some cases, according to a study of the commerce ministry. The study findings were presented

at the meeting, which was attended by representatives of commodity traders, the revenue authority, the central bank, and the Chittagong Port Authority When asked about the price

discrepancy, the representatives of the commodity traders blamed it on the depreciation of the taka against the dollar and the multiple exchange rate system that is currently in force.

"For you, the dollar rate is Tk 111. but for us, it is Tk 116," said one of the

Yesterday, the interbank exchange rate stood at Tk 108.51 for a dollar, according to data from Bangladesh

Taka depreciated by about 18 percent in the past year, according to data from the central bank.

Subsequently, Ghosh asked the BB representative to take measures to arrest the discrepancy in the exchange rate for commodity importers, said meeting sources.

The commodity traders also tried to pass off the elevated prices on banks' stipulation of 100 percent cash

imports, but the BB representatives shot it down.

The requirement of a 100 percent cash deposit is just for luxury products; for food essentials, a token advance is sought, said central bank officials present at the meeting. Still, Ghosh asked them to ensure

smooth LC openings for commodity importers, according to meeting attendants. He also asked the representatives of the Chittagong Port Authority

ensure quick unloading of commodities so that the importers do not have to count late fees. Delays at the port cost the importers

late fees, which they factor in their pricing, and also disrupt the supply chain, the traders said.

The representatives of commodity traders also blamed high duty.

For instance, sugar imports face duties ranging from 62 percent to 67

"This is too much. A Tk 42 duty on a kg of sugar is too high," Ghosh said at the meeting.

For soybean and palm oil, there is an ad valorem duty of 15 percent. The tax incidence for garlic and ginger imports is 10 percent.

Ghosh asked the representatives of the National Board of Revenue to

inflation.

Last week, the commerce ministry wrote to the NBR to bring down the duties; another letter was sent after yesterday's meeting as a formal

Meanwhile, the government also wrote to India seeking to import 15 lakh tonnes of rice, 25 lakh tonnes of wheat, 10 lakh tonnes of sugar, 6 lakh tonnes of onion, 0.50 lakh tonnes of garlic and 1 lakh tonne of ginger on special consideration to meet the shortfall in Bangladesh, The Daily Star has learnt from officials informed of the proceedings.

The commerce ministry now will take all-out initiatives to negotiate with India.

In the letter, Bangladesh requested India to inform ahead of time should the latter plan to impose restrictions on the export of daily essentials. The ministry also decided that

ginger, price of which has increased by as much as four times in recent weeks. would be imported from Myanmar to bring down its prices. All these initiatives are good and welcome, but their implementation

economics department. "Whether the initiatives would be bring down the tax incidence for sugar successful in taming inflation remains

would be tough, said Selim Raihan,

a professor of Dhaka University's

In May, inflation hit an 11-year-high 9.94 percent, taking the average inflation in the first 11 months of the fiscal year to 8.95 percent, considerably overshooting the budgetary target of

Food inflation stood at 9.24 percent, while in urban areas it was 9.97 percent. Raihan said, "Inflation has become

intolerable. It has been this way in the past year. Why did the government let the inflation get to this stage? Why did the commerce ministry take these initiatives after instructions from the prime minister?

If things continue this way, it may create social instability, said Raihan, also the executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling. Subsequently, TCB must expand its

family card programme to more than 1 crore families.

The commerce ministry must also look to diversify its import sources.

"However, prices will not come down automatically if the supply increases since there is market manipulation to consider. Market monitoring is imperative too. Tough measures are needed for these."

And to bring down inflation, the central bank's forthcoming monetary policy will have an important role as it can rein in the demand-side pressure.

Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Sujan) in Khulna, said there were chances of violence because of competition among aspirants from the same party.

Returning Officer Mohammad Alauddin yesterday said, "The Election Commission and law enforcement agencies are working to ensure that voters can vote peacefully."

[Mohammad Jamil Khan, Sushanta Ghosh, Md Abbas, Ashik Abdullah Apu and Sajjad Hossain contributed to the report]

Reason for allowing it 'political' surfaced against Jamaat during the

changed.

matter... for political reasons ... let's see. It is a political decision ... only time will

Razzak said Jamaat is a political party and the High Court verdict was that its charter was in conflict with Bangladesh's constitution, which is not acceptable, reported several news

Despite this, the party has the support of many and in light of this situation, the government has taken steps. "You wait a little, and see what happens," he told journalists at his office after a meeting with the German

Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud said, "As Jamaat has not yet been banned and has sought permission for the rally as a political party, they were granted the permission," UNB quoted him as saying at his ministry.

"Every political party has the right to hold rallies, as long as they are not banned," he added.

We encourage the participation of all political parties in the election. The electoral process extends beyond the election day itself. With only six months until the election, it is customary for political parties to hold meetings in order to create a conducive environment.'

Jamaat to issue a statement about resisting the national election. "The statements made during Jamaat's recent rally reflect the BNP's stance," he said.

Asked, Law Minister Anisul Huq first said the home ministry ministry gave the permission and so it would be better able to answer why Jamaat was allowed to stage the rally.

He said the permission for the rally was not in conflict with the government's position to try Jamaat as a political party for its role in the Liberation War.

The amendment to the relevant laws to try Jamaat as a political party was under process and the final draft of the amendment will be placed before the cabinet soon, he said after a meet-the-press event in Dhaka.

He said plenty of evidence had

war crimes trials. Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan after a programme in Rajarbagh yesterday said the Awami League's policy regarding Jamaat has not

He said Jamaat is an unregistered party that occasionally holds events at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram, as well as in some indoor venues. The DMP commissioner gave verbal

permission for an indoor gathering. That does not mean that we changed our position." On Saturday, Jamaat held the

rally at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh. The last time Jamaat was allowed to hold a rally was on February 5, 2013,

at Shapla Chattar. It had held the rally to protest the trials of its leaders for crimes against humanity. Following a writ petition, the HC

in a landmark verdict on August 1 that year declared illegal the party's registration with the Election Commission.

Jamaat appealed to the apex court challenging the HC verdict in 2013.

The EC scrapped Jamaat's registration in October 2018, making it unable to take part in polls.

He alleged the BNP had instructed China spying from Cuba for years: US

AFP, Washington

China has been operating an intelligence unit in Cuba for years and upgraded it in 2019 in an effort to enhance its presence on the Caribbean island, a White House official said Saturday.

"This is well-documented in the intelligence record," the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said in confirming intelligence presence.

US media in recent days had reported that Beijing was planning to set up a spy base on the island, which is located just off American shores.

His chief election agent Afjalul Karim said, "We don't want to take risks. That is why we did not include certain partymen in our campaign."

Anowar Hossain, vice-president of Barishal City AL known as a follower of Sadiq, said, "We are not given any responsibility in the election, and we do not know how it is taking place."

Even though Islami Andolon Bangladesh (IAB) mayoral candidate Mufti Syed Faizul's campaign was less vibrant than the AL candidate's, ruling party leaders fear that a large number of BNP and Jamaat supporters will vote for Faizul.

All eyes on Barishal, Khulna out of focus
Activists from different parties sav Khair said. "These allegation Activists from different parties say around 1 lakh of the city's 2.76 lakh voters are supporters of the BNP and

Jamaat. Requesting anonymity, a ruling party councillor candidate, who is a close aide to Khair, said, "Everyone appears to be working for the Awami League. But who knows what will

happen during the polls." Meanwhile, JP mayoral candidate Iqbal Hossain Tapos yesterday alleged that the AL has made "extensive preparations to steal votes".

IAB's Faizul also alleged that the AL intended to occupy all the 126 polling Khair said, "These allegations are League leader Golam Rabbani. In Khulna, multiple councillor

candidates from the ruling party

are competing against each other in

several wards. Some BNP and Jamaat leaders are also vying for councillor posts as independents. Three influential local AL leaders Abdur Razzak, Shahadat Mina, and Moniruzzaman Khan Khokon -- are

running for the councillor post in

ward-1. In ward-4, there will be tough competition between BNP leader Kabir Hossain Kabu Mollah, Jamaat leader Ashraf Hossain, and Swechchhasebak

The situation is similar in at least 26 of the 31 wards, said locals.

Qudrat E Khuda, president of