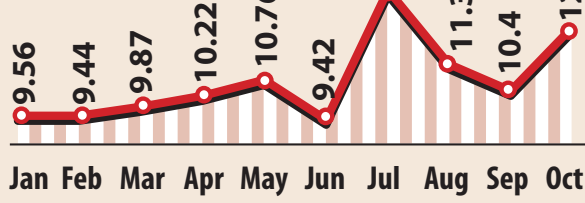




Hunt for OMS food grows desperate

TREND OF FOOD INFLATION IN 2024 IN %



SUKANTA HALDER and MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

In the bustling area of Mirpur-10 in the capital, over 300 people gathered early Monday morning, hoping to buy subsidised essentials that serve as a lifeline for low-income families.

Men, women, and children were waiting under the metro rail station, eagerly anticipating the arrival of a truck from the state-run Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), scheduled to sell rice, lentils, edible oil and other essentials at prices much lower than the market rate.

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 5

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Students of Dhaka College and Dhaka City College clash in the capital's Science Lab area yesterday afternoon. According to police, the clash broke out after a Dhaka College bus was vandalised. The clash left at least 15 people injured. Story on page 3.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

People to decide if AL can contest election or not

Says Mirza Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The people will decide whether the Awami League will be allowed to take part in national elections, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said yesterday.

"Awami League is a political party. It is the people who will decide whether the party will engage in politics or participate in elections," he said while addressing a programme in Feni's Fulgazi upazila.

"But those who have committed murder, tortured people, and laundered the nation's wealth must be brought to book and punished," he added.

Fakhrul said the interim government has done a lot in just three months.

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AMENDED ICT ACT

No provision for punishing any political party

Death sentence remains

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The amended International Crimes Tribunal Act will not include provisions for punishing political parties or any other organisations, or for recommending such punishments, Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul said yesterday.

It will have provisions for appealing to the Appellate Division, and allowing parties to raise questions about a case before the trial concludes, he said at a press briefing at the Foreign Service Academy yesterday.

"This is called interlocutory appeal. It would permit parties to challenge the continuation of the trial in the tribunal. Also, if the tribunal brings contempt of court charges against any party, it can move the Appellate Division for interlocutory redress."

He also confirmed that the death penalty provision in the ICT Act will remain unchanged.

"We have clearly told those calling for removal of this provision that we don't have the scope to abolish it.... We have not ratified the international treaty that calls for abolishing

such sentences. So, we are not obligated."

The advisory council approved the draft of the amended act during a meeting at the Secretariat yesterday, with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus in the chair.

Asif said the interim government thought of making necessary amendments to the ICT Act due to criticism of the law.

The government has consulted national and international legal experts and the stakeholders to amend the law.

The adviser said the draft of the law included a provision for punishing political parties and other organisations, as well as allowing the tribunal to recommend such punishments.

"However, the council of advisers thought that if the provision for punishing a political party or any other organisation is included, it could lead to unnecessary questioning of the law. So, we chose not to include the provision.

"If there is any need to ban any political party or organisation, it could be done through other related laws, such as the electoral law

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

BUSINESS

Moody's lowers banking rating

Moody's has downgraded Bangladesh's banking sector to "very weak" from "weak", citing worsening client confidence, limited transparency and inadequate financial safeguards over the past year.

The global credit rating agency, which provides financial analysis on various entities, revealed its positions on Bangladesh's banking sector on Tuesday -- a day after it downgraded Bangladesh's sovereign rating to B2 from B1, shifting its outlook from stable to negative.

STORY ON B1

We are only facilitators, not rulers: Yunus

The interim government that took the helm of Bangladesh amid high expectations completed its 100 days in office recently. These few months have been fraught with challenges for Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus. The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam sat down with the Nobel peace laureate for an exclusive interview where he spoke about issues ranging from reforms and election to media and foreign policy. An abridged version of the interview was published on Wednesday. Following is the full interview.



The Daily Star: You gave your first interview to The Daily Star in 1992, and now, as the chief adviser, you are giving us your first interview. Thank you very much for that. You've dedicated your life working on poverty alleviation and women's empowerment. How does it feel to suddenly step into political life?

Muhammad Yunus: I'm trying to get a grasp of it. This is an unfamiliar world for me. I'm trying to see how the work I've done all my life can be reflected in this ... how it can be and from which direction.

This is a world that is very difficult to enter, but sometimes opportunities arise. For example, at COP29, I had the chance to speak, and I shared what I've been saying all my life. Many people thought this was not coming from a government. And I made it clear that these were my own words. I speak for myself. Whether people like it or not is up to them. I will continue to say the same thing, whether I am in government or outside it. Whenever I get the opportunity, I will raise these issues.

TDS: That is your world, but politics is not. Politics, this politics of change, politics of charting new horizons, how do you feel in this realm?

Muhammad Yunus: It's a very difficult thing, but it has to keep moving forward. Politics has its own pace, and it moves that way. It's hard to fit my work into it. Not everything aligns perfectly.

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Small boats cross the Buriganga dodging bulk carriers. Many casualties have been reported over the years from collisions involving boats and cargo vessels. The photo was taken in the capital's Babubazar area recently.

Star INTERVIEW

Elected govt needed to revive economy

Says Pran-RFL Group chief Ahsan Khan Chowdhury

SOHEL PARVEZ

The sooner the country returns to a democratic process, the better it is for the economy, said top industrialist Ahsan Khan Chowdhury.

"Businesses will do better [under an elected government]," Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman and chief executive director of PRAN-RFL Group, told The Daily Star in an interview recently.

Pran-RFL wants to invest and expand its business but the sprawling conglomerate, whose turnover is to the tune of Tk 30,000 crore, cannot do so without a stable political and economic environment.

"Because, the political and economic situation highly influences such plans. If there is hartal here today or



worsening law and order, I cannot do anything even if I want."

Unrest among people will subside under a democratically elected government.

"If we can do so and create a mentality of constructive discussion, our country will advance fast," said Chowdhury, who employs about 145,000 people.

He urged policymakers to improve the law and order situation so that normal business and economic activities run smoothly.

Chowdhury, however, said the interim government must succeed if the country is to move forward.

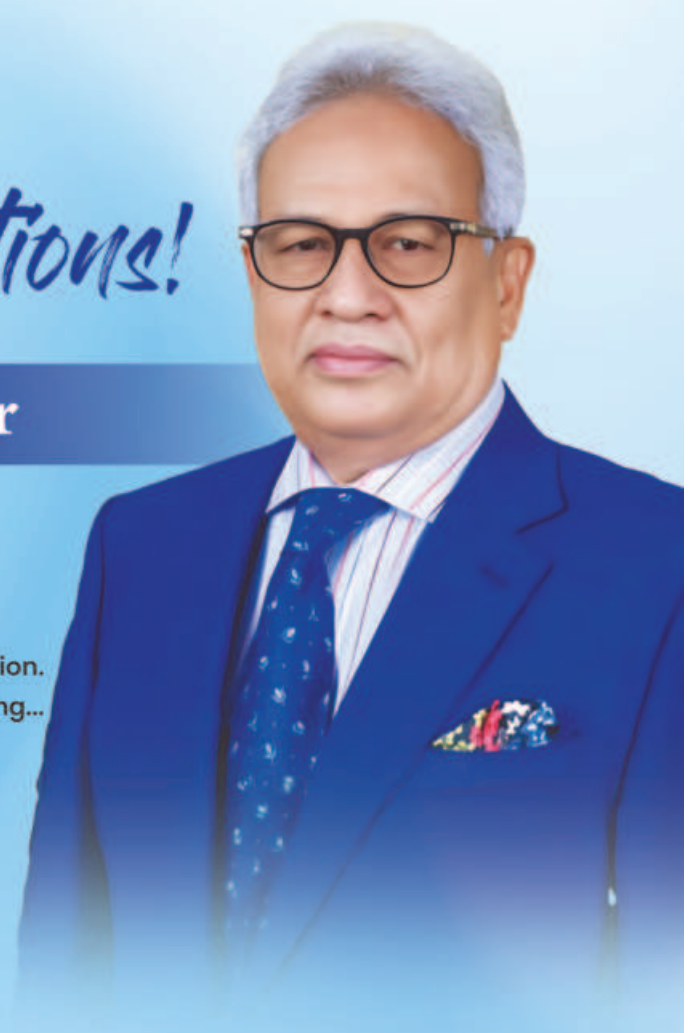
If the law and order situation returns to normal, entrepreneurs will be able to pay attention to their businesses and focus on investment and job creation

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Congratulations!

Abdul Hai Sarker

Warmest congratulations, Mr. Abdul Hai Sarker (Chairman of Dhaka Bank PLC. & Bangladesh Association of Banks) on becoming President of Bangladesh Tennis Federation. Your dedication & leadership are inspiring... Wishing you a great success!



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