

World food prices

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meat, though an official probe into imported beef has raised uncertainty about Chinese demand.

In other meat markets, poultry prices rose slightly following the resumption of imports of Brazilian chicken by major buyers after Brazil regained its avian influenza-free status following action against a first farm-level outbreak.

In contrast, pig meat prices declined due to sufficient supplies and lower demand, particularly in the European Union, FAO added.

The agency's vegetable oil index surged to 166.8 points, up 7.1% month-on-month and the highest level in three years.

This increase was driven by higher quotations for palm, soy, and sunflower oils due to robust global demand and tightening supplies, though rapeseed oil prices

fell as new-crop supplies arrived in Europe, FAO said. FAO's cereal price benchmark eased to its lowest in almost five years, reflecting seasonal supply pressure from wheat harvests in the Northern Hemisphere. GRA/

Its separate rice index dropped 1.8 percent last month, driven by ample export supplies and weak import demand.

Dairy prices edged down for the first time since April 2024, with declines for butter and milk powders offsetting further gains for cheeses.

FAO's sugar price index eased for a fifth consecutive month on expectations of increased production in Brazil and India, despite indications of recovering global sugar import demand, the agency said.

FAO did not update its cereal supply and demand estimates this month.



Once built for beautification, this water fountain in front of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital gate now stands neglected -- surrounded by garbage and overgrown with weeds. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Global outcry as Israel

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Israeli taxpayers tens of billions, and lead to diplomatic bankruptcy".

The main campaign group for hostages' families also slammed the plan, saying it amounted to "abandoning" the captives.

The cabinet chose last night to embark on another march of recklessness, on the backs of the hostages, the soldiers, and Israeli society as a whole," the Hostage and Missing Families Forum said.

An expanded Israeli offensive could see ground troops operate in densely populated areas where hostages are believed to be held, local media have reported.

Other Israelis, meanwhile, offered their support.

"As they take control of Gaza, they will eliminate Hamas completely -- maybe not completely, but at least a good percentage of them," said Chaim Klein, a 26 year-old yeshiva student.

The Israeli army said last month that it controlled 75 percent of the Gaza Strip, mainly from its positions in the territory along the border.

Out of 251 hostages captured during Hamas's 2023 attack, 49 are

still being held in Gaza, including the 27 the military says are dead.

Gaza residents said they feared for the worst, as they braced for the next onslaught.

"They tell us to go south, then back north, and now they want to send us south again. We are human beings, but no one hears us or sees us," Maysa al Shanti, a 52 year-old mother of six, told AFP.

Hamas on Friday said the "plans to occupy Gaza City and evacuate its residents constitute a new war crime".

It warned Israel that the operation would "cost it dearly", and that "expanding the aggression means sacrificing" the hostages.

International concern has been growing over the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza, where a UN-backed assessment has warned that famine is unfolding.

The World Health Organization said at least 99 people have died from malnutrition in the territory this year, with the figure likely an underestimate.

Israel's offensive has killed at least 61,258 Palestinians, according to Hamas-run Gaza's health ministry.

No govt interference in media

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of expression or media independence over the past year.

Since taking office, the interim government has shown "exceptional restraint, avoiding interference in any media outlet's editorial, operational, or business aspects even in the face of misinformation and politically motivated broadcasts", it said.

"Television talk shows and columns have frequently featured false and incendiary claims about this government. Yet, we have neither censored nor retaliated," the statement reads. The government has not censored, retaliated, or filed complaints. The interim government even paved the way for some media that had been forcibly closed down by the past regime to republish or return to on air, it said.

The statement also said journalists have had full access to advisers and special assistants to the chief adviser. No one has been denied interviews or briefings based on their outlet or editorial stance.

The statement said journalists were let go due to editorial and corporate decisions by media owners, not under any instruction or pressure from the

Describing NOAB's criticism of the reformed accreditation system as "misplaced and misinformed", the press wing said the previous system was deeply compromised, allowing access to non-journalists including politicians, lobbyists and opportunists who used it to unfairly influence policy.

That compromised structure has been replaced by a temporary pass system, ensuring only genuine journalists retain access to the Secretariat to restore integrity to a process that had been corrupted, it said. The statement also reads, "We are fully committed to the physical safety and dignity of all citizens, including journalists." Ensuring their protection is a shared responsibility of the media, government, and law enforcement. It also said the government is considering promulgating "Journalists' Protection Law" to strengthen legal safeguards and reduce intimidation as recommended by the Media Reform Commission.

"While we remain open to constructive criticism, we suggest that NOAB look internally before attributing blame," the press wing said.

The press wing urged NOAB to address internal abuses like wage exploitation, unsafe conditions and denial of labour rights and hold members accountable. It said the interim government supports media freedom in practice, not just words. NOAB's concerns would be more valid if fact-based and appropriately directed.

Unfounded claims only distract from real issues, the statement said.

Grieving family seeks justice

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"Tuhin managed food and medicines for me and his mother, Sabahia Khatun Bakul, 80. He sent Tk 1,000 through bKash for my medicines and food and said he would send more money for expenses shortly," Jamal said.

This was the second major blow for the family, he added, as his eldest son Jasim Uddin had died of cancer some 15 years ago. While Jasim's death had devastated the family, Tuhin's earnings had kept them afloat. "Now all hopes are gone, as the other three sons have to manage their own families with their

meagre incomes," Jamal said.

Tuhin's mother became speechless upon hearing the news of her son's death, staring vacantly at the visitors. His elder sister, Shahida Akter Ratna, said she was in Sylhet at her daughter's home.

Family members and locals demanded a proper investigation and immediate arrest of the killers to ensure exemplary punishment.

Protesting the killing, journalists from various media outlets formed a human chain in front of Phulbaria Upazila Parishad Chhatar yesterday morning, organised by Phulbaria Press Club.

26km highway in Natore turns

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free for heavy vehicles. Drivers often speed and overtake recklessly on this two-lane road, which leads to accidents," he said.

He said there are five high-risk spots on the highway -- Razzaker More, Rijur More, Tormuj Pump, Armari Bridge, and the 10 No. Bridge -- mostly due to sharp turns.

Drivers said the road is too narrow for safe movement.

Md Mahabub Hossain,

a driver of Shishir Special Travels, said, "We try to cover time on this road

because other highways are more congested, but the two lanes here are not enough for safe driving."

Md Alhaz, a driver of Siam Paribahan, said,

"There's no divider on this road. Vehicles move fast in both directions on the narrow lanes, and that's the main problem."

Md Shawkat Ali Khokon,

a CNG driver who uses

the service lane beside the highway, said drivers

frequently try to overtake on the narrow lanes, which leads to accidents.

According to police, driver negligence and disregard for traffic rules are major causes behind the frequent accidents. "We have installed many signboards showing speed limits and warning against overtaking, but drivers ignore them," said OC Ismail.

He said traffic has increased in recent years, making the two-lane road insufficient. "Expanding the highway to four lanes with dividers is urgently needed," he said.

Md Kamrul Hasan, executive engineer of the Natore Roads and Highways Department, said road expansion is in progress. "The government has already approved a project to widen the highway to four lanes up to Bonpara. The next phase will include the Bonpara-Hatikumrul section," he said.

Md Alhaz, a driver of Siam Paribahan, said, "There's no divider on this road. Vehicles move fast in both directions on the narrow lanes, and that's the main problem."

Md Shawkat Ali Khokon, a CNG driver who uses

the service lane beside the highway, said drivers

will be

approved within a year. Once completed, there will be a road divider," he added.

He also said while the current two-lane road is manageable for vehicles, drivers must follow speed limits to ensure safety.

They first international order, shipped to Saudi Arabia, marked a turning point.

That milestone led to a growing customer base in Qatar, Dubai, Oman, and Bahrain, and eventually in the UK, Italy, and Germany.

"Receiving that first international order was nerve wracking," Shanta said. "I kept wondering whether it would arrive safely? But once we got positive feedback, it felt amazing."

She said over half of the products they have sent abroad so far were delivered personally through people who just wanted to take some deshi achara to their relatives abroad. "Apart from that, we sometimes use courier services to ship them internationally."

Nasima added, "I treat my daughter-in-law like my own daughter. That's

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BNP, allies to contest polls

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Rahman were present.

Nearly 60 leaders spoke at the event, where top leaders of the 12-party alliance, Jatiyatabadi Samamona Jote, and the Labour Party joined, expressing their full trust in Tarique's leadership.

BNP said that after the chief adviser announced that the election will be held in February next year, the party has taken the initiative to talk with like-minded parties to strengthen ties and exchange views.

Calling on everyone to stay alert regarding the July Declaration and the polls, Tarique said no one should be able to sabotage the election, and all pro-democracy forces must stay united to protect the people's right to vote.

In his opening speech, Tarique said, "Through your unity, our long struggle brought down fascism in the July student-worker-peoples' uprising.

"Through the upcoming election, with the people's vote, we will be able to build a democratic welfare state based on the '31-point' plan."

Leaders of like-minded

parties said that once Tarique returns to the country, he will sit with alliance partners to finalise seat sharing arrangements for the polls.

Tarique told the meeting that in the coming days, any conspiracy over the election would be confronted together and that BNP and its partners would work jointly to solve any crisis.

Jatiya Ganotantrik Party's Khandaker Lutfar Rahman said, "In the coming days, we will stay united in any protest. We will face any conspiracy together."

During the one-hour meeting, Tarique urged everyone to stay alert so that the relationship between BNP and its like-minded allies remains strong and no one can damage it.

He said party leaders should start reaching out to the public and share BNP's commitments.

Labour Party's Mustafizur Rahman Iran said, "We want to walk the path of the coming days together too. Whatever decisions BNP makes, we will support them. The acting chairman [Tarique] said the 31-point plan announced by BNP should be taken to every house."

India pauses plans to buy US arms

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Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had in February announced plans to pursue procurement and joint production of those items.

Singh had also been planning to announce the purchase of six Boeing P8I reconnaissance aircraft and support systems for the Indian Navy during his now-cancelled trip, two of

the people said. Talks over procuring the aircraft in a proposed \$3.6 billion deal were at an advanced stage, according to the officials.

Written instructions had not been given to pause the purchases, another official said, indicating that Delhi had the option to quickly reverse course, though there was "no forward movement at least for now."

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in its invasion of Ukraine. Some Russian weapons have also performed poorly in the battlefield, according to Western analysts.

The broader US-India defence partnership, which includes intelligence sharing and joint military exercises, continues without hiccups, one of the Indian officials said.

India also remains open to scaling back on oil imports from Russia and is open to making deals elsewhere, including the U.S., if it can get similar prices, according to two other Indian sources.

Trump's threats and rising anti-US nationalism in India have "made it politically difficult for Modi to make the shift from Russia to the US," one of the people said. Nonetheless,