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## A relief for consumers

Prices of key Ramadan essentials drop in Dhaka

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Prices of several essential items have fallen in the second week of Ramadan, bringing some relief to consumers in Dhaka. However, traders say the sharp decline is hurting producers at the farm level.

A visit to kitchen markets in Shewrapara, Kazipara, Ibrahimpur, Farmgate, and Karwan Bazar showed noticeable price drops in vegetables, fruits, and some protein items compared to the first days of Ramadan.

Lemons, which sold for Tk 150-200 for four normal-sized pieces two weeks ago, are now priced at Tk 100-120. Slightly smaller lemons, previously Tk 100-120 for four pieces, are now Tk 50-60, while the smallest ones have dropped from Tk 40 to Tk 30.

Cucumber prices have also declined. Local varieties that had reached Tk 160 per kg are now selling at Tk 120. Hybrid cucumbers, which were retailing between Tk 100 and Tk 120 per kg at Karwan Bazar and Mohammadpur Geneva Camp market, are now priced between Tk 60 and Tk 100.

Prices of tomatoes have dropped sharply, from Tk 60-80 per kg to Tk 30-60.

Onion prices have also dropped significantly in retail markets. "Before Ramadan, onions were Tk 200 for 3kg. Today, I bought the same amount for Tk 120," said Awlad Hossain, a customer at Shewrapara Bazar, affirming that

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Vendors have set up stalls at the entrance to the emergency department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, restricting access for patients in need of urgent care. The illegal road occupation leads to congestion and chaos in the area that already sees heavy traffic from ambulances and other vehicles. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## NCP TURNS ONE

### A party yet to find its voice

SHAMIMA RITA

The National Citizen Party (NCP), formed under the leadership of students who coordinated the July uprising, marks its first anniversary today.

The party was officially launched on February 28 last year at Manik Mia Avenue in the capital.



Born out of the student-led mass uprising that toppled the Awami League regime, the party entered the political arena with promises of a "Second Republic" and a new democratic paradigm.

Within a year, it has secured six parliamentary seats through an alliance with the Jamaat-e-Islami, expanded its organisational wings, and announced plans to contest local elections independently.

Yet analysts say the NCP's biggest challenge lies in defining its political identity amid internal divisions, leadership resignations,

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## Saudi invites PM for visit

### Says Khalilur as he spends busy day at OIC meet in Jeddah

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Saudi Arabia expects Prime Minister Tarique Rahman to visit the Kingdom at a mutually convenient time soon and has expressed readiness to work with Bangladesh on opportunities under Saudi Vision 2030.

Saudi Vice Foreign Minister Waleed A Elkhreji conveyed the message during a bilateral meeting with Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman on the sidelines of an OIC foreign ministers' meeting in Jeddah on Thursday.

Elkhreji also invited Khalilur to visit Riyadh, noting that Vision 2030 offers significant opportunities for Bangladesh across a wide range of sectors.

Khalilur said Saudi investors could explore key opportunities in Bangladesh, and both sides agreed to work together to realise the potential. Saudi Arabia is Bangladesh's largest labour market, employing more than two million Bangladeshi workers.

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## US tells its citizens to leave Israel

China, UK join countries in urging nationals to exit Iran as 'biggest military build-up in ME' raises war fears

AGENCIES

The United States authorised the departure of non-emergency embassy staff and their families from Israel yesterday, as it threatened strikes on Iran and pressed its biggest military build-up in the Middle East in decades.

The move came a day after a round of Oman-mediated talks between Iran and the US, seen as a last-ditch bid to avert war. However, initial optimism was tempered by Tehran's warning that Washington must drop "excessive demands" to reach a deal.

As the world's largest aircraft carrier, the USS Gerald R. Ford, was due to arrive off the coast of ally Israel, the US embassy there announced it was allowing non-emergency government personnel and family members to leave "due to safety risks".

"Persons may wish to consider leaving Israel while commercial flights are available," the embassy said on its website.

The New York Times reported that US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee sent an email to embassy staff yesterday morning saying that those wishing to leave

"should do so TODAY".

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will hold talks on Monday in Israel on Iran, the State Department announced.

Growing fears of conflict spurred China to join other

would lead to economic reprieve for their sanctions-hit nation.

The high cost of living had sparked protests in December that rocked Iran's clerical leadership, leading to a crackdown that killed thousands of people, according to

### US-IRAN TENSIONS

- Iran urges US to drop 'excessive demands' to reach deal
- World's largest aircraft carrier nears Israel, joins a dozen more warships
- UN calls for calm ahead of technical-level talks set for next week

countries in warning its citizens to leave Iran "as soon as possible". Britain too withdrew its embassy staff from Iran.

Iranian and Omani officials presented Thursday's talks in Geneva as positive, but the United States has not publicly commented on their outcome.

In Tehran, ordinary Iranians expressed distrust of the United States and hoped negotiations

rights groups.

On February 19, Trump gave Iran 15 days to reach a deal. While Iran has insisted that discussions focus solely on nuclear issues, Washington wants Tehran's missile programme and its support for militant groups curtailed.

Without specifying what demands he was referring to, Iran's

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## World must not normalise use of force

### UN rights chief says

AFP, Geneva

The UN rights chief yesterday voiced alarm at the normalisation of the use of force to resolve disputes, saying armed conflicts had almost doubled since 2010.

"We must not revert to violence as an organising principle," Volker Turk said as he provided an update on rights situations around the world to the United Nations Human Rights Council.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights warned that "the threat and use of force to solve disputes is becoming more frequent and normalised".

"The number of armed conflicts has almost doubled since 2010, to around 60," he said. "The world really is

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## LDC GRADUATION

### UN CDP discusses Bangladesh's deferment plea

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The United Nations Committee for Development Policy (UN CDP) has discussed Bangladesh's request to defer its graduation from the least developed country (LDC) category by three years during its latest plenary session.

The session, 28th of the committee, began at the UN headquarters in New York on February 23 and concluded yesterday.

### AT A GLANCE

- Decision expected within next few weeks
- Economic instability, high inflation, slow growth contribute to request
- Graduation deferral aims to provide policy space for stabilising economy

"We have received the request letter from Bangladesh and discussed the issue at the plenary session," Debapriya Bhattacharya, a member of the UN CDP and its Enhanced Monitoring Mechanism, told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

He said the committee will now prepare a report assessing the government's arguments and outline the process for evaluating the plea. A decision from the CDP may come within the next couple of weeks.

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## Trump, Mamdani meet for 2nd time

### Discuss housing, ICE detentions



REUTERS, Washington

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani said he had a productive meeting with US President Donald Trump at the White House on Thursday, discussing issues including housing and student detentions by federal immigration authorities.

It was the second meeting between them since Mamdani's mayoral election win late last year. Mamdani is a Democrat and Trump a Republican.

Mamdani posted a photo with Trump on social media. "I had a productive meeting with President Trump this afternoon. I'm looking forward to building more housing in New York City," Mamdani wrote.

Mamdani said he raised concerns with Trump about a detention on Thursday of Columbia University student Elmina Aghayeva from Azerbaijan by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement and that Trump later informed him she will be "released imminently."



Will Jinks and Rehan Ahmed celebrate after steering England to a four-wicket win over New Zealand in a thrilling T20 World Cup Super Eight clash in Colombo yesterday. Jinks smashed 32 off 18 balls and Rehan struck 19 off seven as the pair shared an unbroken 44-run seventh-wicket stand to seal the chase of 159-7 with three balls to spare. The result left New Zealand's semifinal hopes hanging in the balance and kept Pakistan in contention for a final-four berth.

PHOTO: AFP

Schoolteacher's home declared a bird haven

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**PRAYER TIMING**  
FEBRUARY 28

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
5:08	12:45	4:30	6:02	7:30
JAMAAT	5:18	1:15	4:45	6:12
				8:00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

**SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING**

RAMADAN	FEB	SEHRI	IFTAR
10	28	5:02	6:02
11	Mar 1	5:05	6:03
12	2	5:04	6:03