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Hormuz crisis further deepens

Iran seizes two ships for maritime violations after Trump extends ceasefire; US blockade to continue

Trump says talks could be held in next three days

Oil price jumps to \$101 a barrel

Iran parades ballistic missiles in Tehran

Iran president blames US for talks impasse

AGENCIES

Uncertainty over the Strait of Hormuz deepened yesterday after Iran's Revolutionary Guards seized two container ships trying to cross, hours after US President Donald Trump unilaterally extended a ceasefire to allow more time for talks.

Trump said on social media late on Tuesday that the US had agreed to a request by Pakistani mediators "to hold our attack on the Country of Iran until such time as their leaders and representatives can come up with a unified proposal... and discussions are concluded, one way or the other."

A source briefed on the matter yesterday confirmed that Trump had not set a timeline for the extension of the ceasefire.

Despite the extension, Trump has maintained a US Navy blockade of Iran's trade by sea. Iran considers the blockade an act of war and has said that as long as it continues, it will not lift its closure of the strait, which has caused a global energy crisis.

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A factory is being built on farmland in Debitala of Khulna's Botiaghata upazila, raising concerns among locals and farmers about its impact on arable land. Locals fear the loss of farmland will threaten the livelihoods of those dependent on agriculture. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

'We are open to opposition input on fuel situation'

PM tells JS; Shafiqur proposes 'common committee'

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday told parliament that the government will consider the opposition's proposal regarding the fuel situation and, if it contains realistic measures, will certainly act on them.

Opposition leader Shafiqur Rahman earlier proposed forming a "common committee" comprising government and opposition members to address the current situation.

Also speaking in yesterday's parliamentary sitting, the Jamaat-e-Islami chief said they were ready to sit with an open heart, present their proposals to the government, but it is the government's responsibility to implement them.

The opposition also alleged that while the nation is struggling over fuel shortages, the government continues to deny the crisis with misleading claims.

The comments came during a discussion on the fuel crisis, as the opposition leader raised the issue as an urgent public matter.

The fuel crunch became an issue after the onset of the US-Israel war on Iran.

Leader of the House Tarique said, "I want to inform parliament that we will indeed invite the opposition. We will sit, we will discuss, we will examine their proposals. If there is anything realistic and implementable, we will certainly carry it out. Why wouldn't we? Because whichever side of the floor we sit on, the people of Bangladesh have sent us here to serve their interests."

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

Govt sticks to old Boro price despite high production cost

SUKANTA HALDER

The government has kept Boro paddy procurement price unchanged this season, even though farmers say their cultivation costs have risen.

The food ministry will buy 5 lakh tonnes of paddy at Tk 36 per kg during the current Boro harvest season, the largest rice crop in Bangladesh. Last year's procurement target was

crop, particularly in the northeastern Haor region, where costs have climbed following a hike in diesel price.

In its latest Foreign Agricultural Service report, the US Department of Agriculture said farmers in the northern part of the country reported that labour wages were particularly high this year, especially during the peak period of rice transplantation.

Agriculture ministry estimates put the



"Even a small increase of two to three taka per kilogram could have helped farmers recover rising costs."

JAHANGIR ALAM KHAN, agricultural economist

3.5 lakh tonnes.

It will also buy 12.5 lakh tonnes of parboiled rice at Tk 49 per kg.

The nationwide procurement drive for paddy, rice, and wheat will run from May 3 to August 31, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed announced after a meeting of the Food Planning and Monitoring Committee (FPMC) at the Secretariat.

The announcement comes as farmers begin harvesting the highly irrigation-dependent

production cost of Boro at Tk 32.97 per kg this season, up marginally from Tk 32.96 last year. Farmers, however, say the figure does not reflect reality.

"I am worried about how I will cover the losses I will incur this year," said Mohammad Saidur Islam, a farmer from Azmiriganj in Habiganj, who cultivated Boro on 15 acres of land.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Soybean oil imports plunge

Importers blame unadjusted prices; minister says situation stable



SUKANTA HALDER and REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Soybean oil imports fell sharply during January-April this year compared to the same period last year, according to commerce ministry data.

Importers said they scaled back shipments because domestic prices have not been adjusted in line with international market rates. They added that continuing to sell at a loss is unsustainable, despite repeated appeals to both the current and immediate past interim governments for a price hike.

The government is trying to keep prices under control and claims that the import situation is still stable and there is no need for interference now.

According to commerce ministry documents, palm oil imports remained almost unchanged from 4.59 lakh tonnes between January 1 and April 15 last year to 4.57 lakh tonnes in the same period this year.

Soybean oil imports, however, registered a steep fall from 4.48 lakh tonnes to 2.61 lakh tonnes in this period.

Bangladesh's annual demand for edible oil stands at 24 lakh tonnes, around 90 percent of which is met through

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TONU MURDER First arrest made 10yrs after killing

Ex-army man on 3-day remand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Ex-army man Hafizur Rahman, a suspect in the Tonu murder case, was produced before a Cumilla court yesterday.

He is the first to be arrested after Sohagi Jahan Tonu was murdered 10 years ago.

The court placed Hafizur on a three-day remand.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Mominul Haque issued the order in the afternoon at Cumilla Sadar Cognisance Court-1 after the Police Bureau

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Farmers harvest Boro paddy on the dried-up Shib river in Tanore upazila of Rajshahi. Wearing traditional hats, they toil under the scorching summer sun, anxious about possible losses from hailstorms and not getting a fair price for their produce. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

'Gupto' graffiti spreads in univs

JCD activist, Jamaat adherent identified in photos of Tuesday's clash in Ctg

STAR REPORT

Leaders and activists of Chhatra Dal at several universities, including Dhaka University, yesterday painted graffiti on their campus to protest alleged attacks on their fellows by Islami Chhatra Shibir men at Government City College, Chattogram, on Tuesday.

Other institutions include Chittagong University, Jahangirnagar University, Rajshahi University, and Jagannath University.

The clash between the two groups broke out in Chattogram after Chhatra Dal activists reportedly erased the word "student" from a graffiti and replaced it with the word "gupto" (covert).

The clash that ensued between Chhatra Dal and Chhatra Shibir left several injured.

JCD activists at DU said they went for graffiti as a form of protest against the Chattogram City College incident.

Mallik Wasi Tami, office secretary of JCD's DU unit, said the initiative was not organised by central JCD and that it was a spontaneous act of activists across several institutions.

Nasir Uddin Shawon, senior joint secretary of the DU

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A graffiti at DU.