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By Ruma Paul

(Reuters) - Bangladesh's annual inflation rate picked up in March for a second straight month as political unrest disrupted supply chains and pushed food prices higher, despite a drop in global commodity prices.

Consumer prices in March rose 6.27 percent from a year earlier, accelerating from 6.14 percent in February, when inflation picked up for the first time since August, planning minister Mustafa Kamal said on Tuesday.

The country has been racked by violent protests, transport blockades and a series of strikes led by the main opposition party aimed at toppling the government.

"Food prices went up due to transportation disruptions amid political chaos," Kamal told a news conference while unveiling the inflation data.

Food prices in March were 6.37 percent higher than a year earlier, up from February's 6.11 percent annual pace. In contrast, the non-food inflation rate edged down to 6.12 percent from 6.20 percent the previous month.

Global food prices fell in March to their lowest in almost five years as supplies of most commodities, including cereals and meat, remained robust, the United Nations food agency said last week.

On Sunday, Bangladesh's former premier and main opposition leader Khaleda Zia was granted bail in two graft cases after she appeared before a special court, a potential sign of easing tensions in the politically unstable South Asian country.

Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party has intensified protests this year in a bid to force Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to step down and hold a new vote under a neutral caretaker administration after a disputed 2014 poll.

More than 120 people have been killed and hundreds injured in political violence, most in petrol bomb attacks on vehicles, this year.

Unrest over the past three months has cost at least 49 billion taka (\$630 million) or 0.6 percent of the country's gross domestic product, the Centre for Policy Dialogue, a leading private think-tank, said on Sunday.

The government aims to hold inflation to 6.5 percent in the current fiscal year. The central bank has kept its key policy rates unchanged since February 2013, when it cut them by half a percentage point. (Editing by Kim Coghill)

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