

Onion prices soar

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in Mohakhali.

Abdus Salam, a retailer at Karwan Bazar, also said he never saw vegetable prices shooting up when winter is in its peak.

He said in January last year, he sold potato for Tk 15-16 a kg, bean Tk 15-20 while a piece of cauliflower or cabbage at Tk 10-15.

But last week, he sold potato for Tk 25 a kg, and bean Tk 20 per kg. Yesterday, he was selling potato at Tk 30, bean Tk 50 per kg.

He sold a piece of cauliflower and cabbage at Tk 40.

Prices of many other cooking essentials and vegetables have increased significantly than a year ago.

In the meantime, spiralling onion prices keep worrying people.

About a week ago, Rabiul Islam Rabi in Pabna bought onion at Tk 100 per kg, but to his surprise it has almost doubled.

“They are asking Tk 200 to Tk 220 for each kg of onion,” he told this newspaper.

Pabna is one of the biggest onion-growing hubs in the country. A total of 49,800 hectares of land has been brought under onion cultivation in the district this year, with a target of producing 7.5 lakh tonnes of onion, said Azhar Ali, deputy director of Department of Agricultural Extension.

The crop would not be available in the market until March, he told our Pabna correspondent.

On the other hand, the harvesting of mulkata onion, a local variety, is going to end in a few days.

“Currently, the onion prices largely depend on the supply of mulkata onion. But its harvesting is now at the late stage,” said Abdur Razzak, a wholesaler at Pabna’s Sujanagar wholesale market.

He said prices of onion have gone up due to a lack of supply. He expressed concern that the prices might rise further if enough imported onion was not supplied in the next few days.

Following the meeting with businessmen on Thursday, the commerce minister said the government would import two lakh tonnes of onion soon to meet local demand and arrest any price spiral before the beginning of Ramadan in April.

RETAILERS IN TROUBLE ALSO

Retailers said they were facing troubles due to frequent rise in prices of essentials as customers often get into heated arguments with them.

Abdul Gafur, a vegetable trader in the capital’s Shewrapara, said frequent changes in prices were causing trouble to them. “People don’t want to trust us.”

Other than vegetables, the prices of spices have also increased sharply in the last few months.

Take for example the price of cardamom. Each kg of the spice was being sold at Tk 4,000 to Tk 4,500 yesterday, up from Tk 1,500 to Tk 2,000 about six months ago.

Md Enayetullah, president of Bangladesh Paikari Garam Masala Baboshayi Samity, said they import cardamom from Guatemala.

“India usually exports cardamom. But it saw a production loss of about 70 percent this year due to rain. They are also importing cardamom from Guatemala and that’s why the price has increased.”

Enayetullah said Bangladesh’s spice market depends on import. “The price of US dollar has increased recently which will have an impact on the prices of other spices in future,” he added.

ITEM	PRICE (TK PER KG/PIECE)		HIKE (IN TK)
	January 3, 2020	January 3, 2019	
Onion (local)	160-180	25-35	135-145
Onion (imported)	60-130	25-30	35-100
Ginger	145	95	50
Garlic	150	70	80
Lentil (Mashur)	110	85	25
Sugar	62-65	50	12-15
Brinjal	40	30	10
Tomato	70-90	35-40	35-50
Bitter gourd	70	30	40
Cauliflower	35	20	15
Cabbage	35	20	15
Green papaya	25	20	05
Bean	50	27	23
Radish	23	19	04
Gourd	45	30	15
Cardamom	4,000-4,500	1,550-2,000	2,500
Cinnamon	400-450	300-350	100
Rui fish	260	220	40
Tilapia	140	130	10
Small shrimp	550	475	75
Catla	275	215	60

SOURCE: TRADING CORPORATION OF BANGLADESH, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE MARKETING, DHAKA METROPOLITAN POLICE AND VISITS TO KARWANBAZAR, JATRA-BARI AND SHANTINAGER MARKETS.

Watson keeps Rangpur

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of the chase, Sylhet were in the game as Sherfane Rutherford hit his maiden T20 fifty. With 59 required from the last five overs and with five wickets in hand, it seemed that the game would go down to the wire, but the wheels came off when Rutherford was run out in lackadaisical fashion in the 17th over, when he failed to ground his bat and was airborne when the throw hit the non-striker's stumps. After Rutherford walked back for a 37-ball 60, with the score on 145 for seven, Sylhet limped to 161 all out with last man Monir Hossain absent hurt.

Mustafizur Rahman once again impressed for Rangpur, taking two wickets for 18 runs in 3.1 overs. Mustafizur now sits atop the wicket-takers' list with 16 from 10 games.

Earlier, Sylhet chose to field at the toss and were put under pressure by a 77-run opening stand between Mohammad Naim and Watson. The left-handed Naim's 33-ball 42 continued a consistent run this season, but the main thrust of Rangpur's innings came from captain Watson, who had scored just 15 runs in his first four matches.

Watson started the carnage in the fifth over from off-spinner Nayeem Hasan, hammering two sixes and two fours. Naim's dismissal, caught off Monir Hossain in the ninth over, opened the door for another big partnership as Cameron Delpoit added 61 runs with Watson in just 35 balls.

Watson reached his 50 off 31 balls in the 13th over by hitting Sherfane Rutherford for a four and a six. He followed that up with two more sixes and a four off Shohag Gazi in the next over. Then, against the run of play, Sylhet pacer Ebadot Hossain came in and had Delpoit caught in the deep and in the very next ball, for the second time in as many matches,

bowled Watson with an inch-perfect yorker and reducing Rangpur to 138 for three. Watson's departure did dent the momentum, but cameos from Mohammad Nabi (23 off 17) and Fazle Mahmud (16 off eight) lifted Rangpur to an above-par total.

In the day's first match, Dhaka Platoon rode on a four-for from young pacer Hasan Mahmud to defeat Khulna Tigers by 12 runs and take top spot in the seven-team table. Khulna skipper hit a fantastic 33-ball 64 but it turned out to be in vain as they ended on 160 for eight, chasing Dhaka's 172 for four.

Mirpur SI

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College Hospital for medical tests.

SI Bappi, hailing from Kishoreganj's Tarail, was arrested in Agargaon area of the capital the same day, he added.

Two killed

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He was declared dead on arrival by doctors at Chattogram Medical College Hospital.

The body was sent to the hospital morgue for an autopsy, said the OC, adding that they found a firearm and five bullets from the spot.

In Satkhira Sadar upazila, a suspected robber Zakir Hossain Gazi, 38, of Matiadanga, was killed in a "gunfight" with police around 1:30am.

He was an accused in 13 cases with different police stations, said Mirza Salahuddin Ahmed, additional superintendent of Satkhira (Sadar circle) police.

He was found dead after a "gunfight" between police and "robbers" at Damarpota area, he said, adding that they seized a firearm and two bullets from the spot.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing the first joint meeting of the newly-formed Awami League Central Working Committee and the Advisory Council at the party headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Organised party gives strength to government

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and ward AL units, which were yet to hold their councils, to do so quickly for having a stronger party across the country. “We’ve to build the entire party in a stronger way.”

She also put emphasis on holding councils of the party’s associate organisations.

Hasina said those who came to power after the assassination of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975 never believed in the liberation of the country. “That’s why they had tried hard to make the country a failed state

and that was their main intention.”

She said but the AL’s aim was to prove meaningful the country’s hard-earned independence that came after the struggle of 24 years under the leadership of Bangabandhu, and that must not go in vain.

The killing of Bangabandhu and other AL leaders was to keep the AL away from power, Hasina added. “They [killers] had wanted to make it sure that the AL could never come to power.”

Terming 2020 a very important year for Bangladesh, the PM said this year the country would celebrate “Mujib

Borsho” to mark the birth centenary of Bangabandhu.

“With a new spirit, we’ll make Bangladesh a developed country so that people can keep their heads high anywhere in the world, and that’s our promise.”

Briefly describing conspiracies and propaganda against her party after 1975, Hasina said the conspirators had often said AL leaders were not smart, modern, and educated.

“Those who had come to power claiming themselves smart got indulged in looting, money laundering, and corruption. Their

smartness was to make money for themselves.”

The AL has proved that only this party can develop the country and make it a prosperous one, Hasina said.

TWO COMMITTEES

At the meeting, the party also formed two committees, including its senior leaders, to run activities of Dhaka city polls slated for January 30, reports our staff correspondent.

Sources said AL leader Amir Hossain Amu will lead a team for the party candidates for Dhaka South City Corporation, and Tofail Ahmed for Dhaka North City Corporation.

Furious Iran for ‘harsh revenge’

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had raised the risk of more violence in a dangerous region.

Pompeo, in interviews on Fox News and CNN, declined to discuss many details of the alleged threat but said it was “an intelligence based assessment” that drove the decision to target Soleimani.

In a tweet, Trump said Soleimani had “killed or badly wounded thousands of Americans over an extended period of time, and was plotting to kill many more”, but did not elaborate.

The attack also killed pro-Iran Iraqi militia Hashed al-Shaabi’s deputy chief Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

The attack followed a sharp increase in US-Iranian hostilities last week when pro-Iranian militiamen attacked the US embassy in Iraq following a deadly US air raid on the Kataib Hezbollah militia, founded by Muhandis.

Khamenei said “harsh revenge” awaited the “criminals” who killed Soleimani and said his death would redouble resistance against the United States and Israel. He called for three days of national mourning starting from today and appointed Soleimani’s deputy, Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani, to replace him as Quds Force head.

“America should know that its criminal attack on General Soleimani has been the country’s biggest mistake in west Asia, and America will not avoid the consequences of this wrong calculation easily,” the Iranian Supreme National Security Council said in a statement.

“These criminals will face severe vengeance... in the right place and time,” it added.

US officials said Soleimani was killed in a drone strike. Iran said he died in an attack by US helicopters.

Tens of thousands of angry Iranians took to the streets of Tehran chanting “Death to America” and holding up posters of Soleimani, who was widely admired in the Islamic republic.

The US embassy in Baghdad urged all American citizens to leave Iraq “immediately” and US nationals working at southern oil fields were being evacuated, Iraq’s petrol ministry said.

Amid rising threats to American forces in the region, US officials yesterday said that Pentagon was sending up to 3,500 additional troops to the Middle East from the 82nd Airborne Division as a precaution.

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the troops would be joining the roughly 750 forces that were sent to Kuwait earlier this week.

Since May, the United States has already dispatched about 14,000 additional troops to the Middle East.

Earlier yesterday, a precision drone strike, as claimed by US, struck two cars belonging to Iraq’s Hashed al-Shaabi, a paramilitary force with close ties to Iran, as they drove away from Baghdad International Airport.

Hours later, Iran’s Revolutionary

Guard Corps announced Soleimani “was martyred in an attack by America”. It said five Guards were killed in total as well as five members of the Hashed.

Both Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis were targeted by US sanctions.

Iraq’s parliament is set to hold an emergency meeting today where the presence of US forces in the country is expected to be discussed. A leading Hashed member, Hadi al-Ameri, urged lawmakers “to take a bold decision to oust foreign troops from Iraq, because their presence has become a threat for Iraqis”.

Some 5,200 US troops are stationed

As fears of a regional conflagration grew, Yemen’s pro-Tehran Huthi rebels -- who have launched a string of missile attacks on Iran’s regional rival Saudi Arabia -- called for “swift reprisals”.

But there were daring celebrations in Baghdad’s Tahrir Square, the epicentre of a three-month-old protest movement that has slammed the Iraqi government as corrupt and beholden to Tehran.

“Oh Qasem Soleimani, this is a divine victory,” demonstrators chanted as some danced in the streets.

And Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised Trump “for acting swiftly, forcefully and

Ties between the US and Iran have deteriorated markedly since Washington abandoned a landmark nuclear deal with Tehran in 2018 and reimposed crippling sanctions.

On Tuesday, a mob of Hashed supporters surrounded the US embassy, angered by American air strikes that killed 25 fighters from the network’s headline Iran-backed Kataeb Hezbollah faction.

The US had acted in response to a rocket attack days earlier that killed an American contractor working in Iraq on Friday.

Trump had blamed Iran for the embassy siege and rocket attacks, saying: “They will pay a very BIG PRICE! This is not a Warning, it is a Threat.”

AUSTRALIA BUSHFIRES Wildlife could take decades to recover

AFP, Sydney

The bushfires raging across Australia have had a devastating impact on the country’s unique flora and fauna, with some estimates putting the death toll at nearly half a billion animals in one state alone, and experts believe it could take decades for wildlife to recover.

Unprecedented temperatures across the continent have made this season’s fires particularly deadly, killing at least 20 people and bringing apocalyptic scenes to an area roughly twice the size of Belgium.

The crisis has focused attention on climate change, which scientists say is creating a longer and more intense bushfire season, and the Australian government has faced widespread criticism over its response and wider environmental policy.

Harrowing footage of desperate koalas drinking from water bottles handed to them by rescuers and kangaroos standing helpless in fire-ravaged towns and charred forests have shocked people across the world.

There is some hope, however, as experts believe scorched forests can recover in time, and decimated populations of koalas, kangaroos and other badly affected species may be able to return.

A University of Sydney study estimates that 480 million animals have been killed in just the state of New South Wales (NSW) since September 2019, and according to a statement released yesterday the authors said the “highly conservative” mortality calculations could mean the toll could be “substantially higher”.

In order to reach the figure, the researchers cross-referenced estimates of mammal population density in NSW with areas of vegetation known to have been scorched to work out the death toll, which includes mammals, birds and reptiles, but not insects, bats or frogs.



across the country, and a US defence official told AFP that some additional forces had arrived in recent hours to boost security at the American embassy.

Iran’s Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif slammed the US strike as “extremely dangerous and a foolish escalation,” as Khamenei declared three days of mourning.

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi said the strike was a “flagrant violation” of a security accord with the US, warning it would “spark a devastating war in Iraq”.

And Iraqi President Barham Saleh called for “restraint” -- an appeal echoed by alarmed foreign governments. Israel put its army on high alert and US allies in Europe including Britain, France and Germany voiced concerns about an escalation in tensions.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called for de-escalation in the Gulf, saying: “The world cannot afford another war in the Gulf.”

But paramilitary figures in Iraq including US-blacklisted Qais al-Khazali and militiaman-turned-politician Moqtada Sadr called on their fighters to “be ready”.

And in Lebanon, the leader of the Tehran-backed Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, warned of “punishment for these criminal assassins.”

decisively,” as Israeli tanks deployed along the occupied Golan Heights in fear of reprisal attacks.

Trump critics called the operation reckless.

“President Trump just tossed a stick of dynamite into a tinderbox,” said former Vice President Joe Biden, a contender in this year’s US presidential election.

As leader of the Quds Force, the foreign arm of the Guardians, Soleimani had a key role in fighting in Syria and Iraq.

Over two decades he was at the forefront of projecting the Islamic Republic’s military influence across the Middle East, acquiring celebrity status at home and abroad.

Analysts said the strike -- which sent world oil prices soaring over concern about disruption to Middle East supplies-- would be a game-changer in the tensions between Iran and the US.

Phillip Smyth, a US-based specialist in Shiite armed groups, described the killing as “the most major decapitation strike that the US has ever pulled off”.

He told AFP it would have “bigger” ramifications than the 2011 US operation that killed al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden and the 2019 American raid that killed Islamic State group Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.