

City markets hostage in hands of coterie

By Shahiduzzaman Khan

A huge gap between the prices of essential commodities in the wholesale and the retail markets persists due to manipulation by a section of dishonest traders.

A random survey of both the markets suggests retailers are 'obliged' to sell commodities at prices fixed by the group who control both the markets.

If any retailer is found to sell commodities at a lower price, he may face the danger of being harassed by the coterie of traders who manipulate the market. It is difficult to go beyond the 'unwritten laws', says a retail trader.

Five kgs of brinjal sells at Tk 8 in the wholesale market, but in the retail market, one kg of brinjal sells at Tk 6 to Tk 8.

Five kgs of tomato sells at Tk 15 in the wholesale market but a kg of tomato is priced at Tk 8 in the retail market. Similarly, five kgs of green chilli sells at Tk 50 in the wholesale market but the retailers sell it at Tk 28 per kg.

Retailers buy five kg of onions at Tk 50 while they charge Tk 14 a kg. Five kgs of potato is priced at Tk 10 to 12 in the wholesale market but the retailers sell potato at Tk 4 per kg. Five kgs of carrot sell

JP MPs

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Speaker Reazuddin Ahmed Bholi Miah, who was elected MP on JP ticket observed that the government had failed to create congenial atmosphere for the JP MPs to take oath. The meeting also has given a fresh ultimatum to the government urging creating of congenial atmosphere by releasing party chairman ousted President Ershad and other former ministers of Jatiya Party who were elected MP by April 1.

The meeting of the parliamentary party was adjourned till 5 p.m. on April 1.

Party sources said they would also challenge the election of women MPs at the higher court if the election were held before taking oath by the JP MPs.

Sirajul Haque

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tried to change over to parliamentary form of government with the support of Jatiya Party in 1987. The BNP was not in the Parliament.

UNB adds: When contacted over telephone, Sajeda Chowdhury confirmed receipt of the resignation letter and said the Awami League Central Committee will take the final decision in the matter.

In his letter, Haque said he had decided to resign from the Awami League 'in the interest of my professional duty and because of my preoccupation as a lawyer'.

He further said, 'To avoid all kinds of misunderstanding and embarrassment to my party, I have decided to retire from active politics... and this letter may be created as resignation from the party as well if the authorities so decide.'

Haque, a close friend of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, joined Awami League in 1954. He was elected a Member of the National Assembly in 1970 and Member of Parliament in 1973 on Awami League ticket.

Sirajul Haque, who has now decided to defend Ershad, was arrested and detained in Dhaka Central Jail by the Ershad government in 1982 for organising the lawyers strike in Supreme Court against decentralisation of the High Court.

AL questions election to women seats

Bangladesh Awami League Friday said the elections for the 30 parliamentary seats reserved for women was 'unconstitutional and undemocratic' as bye-elections to ten constituencies were yet to be held.

Mohammad Nasim, Publicity Secretary of Awami League, told BSS that this opinion was expressed in a meeting of the party's parliamentary group held in Dhaka. The meeting discussed the elections for the reserved seats scheduled for April 4.

It was stated that the electoral roll of the 300-member house would remain incomplete unless bye-elections were held to fill up the ten seats which fell vacant following the resignation of candidates who won from more than one constituencies, Mr Nasim added.

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Friday presented a rickshaw to Harunur Rashid, husband of Hasina who was killed in the recent anti-autocracy movement, at the Banani — PID photo

Khaleda: Reforms

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tural sectors in consistent with its political compulsion.

The Prime Minister also assured that stern action would be initiated to bring about discipline in the banking and industrial sectors and eliminate wastage and inefficiency from the government sectors and corporations.

The Prime Minister pointed out that it had been found that budgetary and fiscal indiscretions and staggering financial mismanagement and corruption were motivated actions of the past regime. This action had left unhappy and accumulated problems which the new government is confronting, she said.

Begum Zia said the new government would need some time and cooperation from donor agencies like World Bank, IMF and Asian Development Bank to resolve this accumulated problem left over by the disgraced Ershad regime.

Begum Zia said, 'since we are a people's government, we will be able to accept the reform programmes as long as those are not imposing too much burden and inconvenience to the poor people.'

The meeting noted that the World Bank would assure all out support and assistance in implementing the primary and secondary education programmes and other development efforts in Bangladesh.

The construction of Jamuna Multi-Purpose Bridge also came up in the discussion.

The World Bank official also discussed different aspects of trade and industrial policies, health and family planning programmes, IDA credit programmes and technical assistance in Bangladesh.

The mission chief of World Bank in Bangladesh, Willoughby and senior officials of World Bank, were present on the occasion.

industrial sectors credit programmes in Bangladesh.

He said industries would be brought nearer to the people rather than to the industries. In this regard he stressed the expansion of industrial investment all over the country according to the local potentials to bring the national economy as production oriented.

He also emphasised the need for increasing the internal resource mobilisation aimed at financing the production-oriented development programmes in the country.

The Finance and Planning Minister said the government would implement the primary and secondary education programme on priority basis making the programme universal for overall socio-economic development.

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The bodies were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

In another incident, at least 12 people, including two women, were seriously injured when two minibuses collided near Asad Gate Friday morning. Fire Service sources said, reports UNB.

The injured passengers were rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

They were identified as Nandita Mondal (50), Ranubala (27), Abdur Rashid (28), Nurul Islam (26), Abdul Aziz (30), Kalidash Mondal (28), Krishna Chandra (30), Mizanur Rahman (35), Subhash Chandra (25), Dhaman Ali (35), Anil (27) and Shadhan Chandra.

Sugar price has shown a downturn. It now sells at Tk 28 to Tk 29 per kg compared to Tk 30 to 32 during the start of Ramzan. Traders say smuggled sugar had flooded the local market and as such, the price came down. The local sugar mills are in real dilemma with huge stocks of unsold sugar. The price of molasses has risen to Tk 24 per kg compared to Tk 18 to Tk 20 a few days back.

Prices of baby food and powdered milk varieties remain static. Most of the tinned milk brands sell between Tk

Suranjit

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to attend the first sitting on April 5 under his chairmanship, he would adjourn the house for an indefinite period.

After this statement, Sengupta said, members of parliament could move a resolution under article 74(C) of the constitution for his removal from the office of the Speaker.

He said the Speaker has abused his power by his statement and requested the Acting President to persuade the Speaker to choose an alternative for the sake of democracy as well as constitutional continuity.

Sengupta, a well-known parliamentarian, said the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, if they so wish, may remain absent in many ways.

In this regard, he referred to sub-article (2), (3) and (4) of article 74 of the Constitution and article 12 (2) of the Rules of Procedure wherein, he said, it has been clearly stated how the House would be conducted in their absence.

Article 12 (2) of the Rules of Procedure says: If at any time, at a sitting of parliament neither the Speaker nor the Deputy Speaker nor any person on the panel of Chairmen is present, the Secretary shall inform the house of that fact, and the House shall, by a motion, elect one of the members present to preside.

Earlier report adds: The PUK spokesman said rebels had captured 150 pro-Iraqi Iranian dissidents, accused by Kurds of fighting as mercenaries for Baghdad, at Altin Korp, a town about 25 miles (40 km) northwest of Kirkuk on the road to the city of Irbil.

About 150 of the mercenaries of Mujahideen Khalq who took part in the assault on the rebels were captured, he said.

Before Saddam invaded Kuwait last August Kirkuk produced one-third of Iraq's oil. It also controls a key pipeline.

Iraq's Defence Ministry newspaper Al-Qadissiyah said on Friday that Kurdish rebels in the north were retreating in the face of a successful government drive against them.

The government daily Al-Jumhouriya said Iraq had foiled 'the major parts of the conspiracy in central and southern Iraq', and would soon crush the revolt in the north.

The PUK spokesman also reported on Friday the capture of Shaykhan, a town about 60 km (40 miles) northeast of Mosul, Iraq's third biggest city.

He said rebels were consolidating their grip on routes to Mosul, Saddam's last stronghold in northern Iraq. Mosul is not less important than Kirkuk. Its capture would constitute a turning point in

the fight against Saddam,' he added.

Hammoudi is head of the Arab Desk at the Iraqi Foreign Ministry. He spoke to reporters at Cairo airport when he arrived to represent Baghdad at an Arab League meeting on Saturday.

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