

Prices of Iftar items becoming dear

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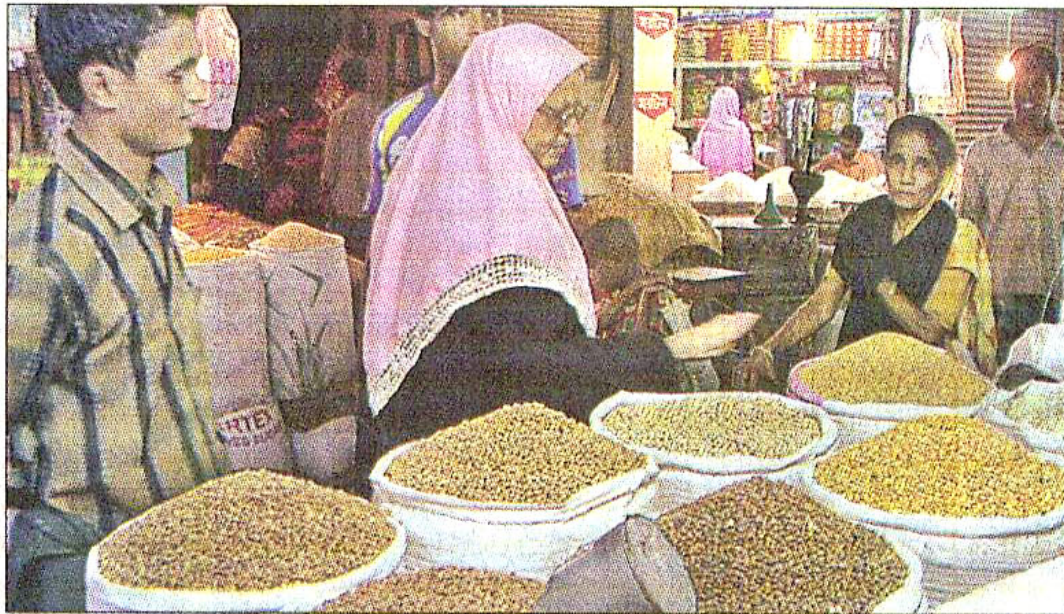
The prices of essentials have begun to shoot up in the port city ahead of the holy month of Ramadan, worrying the low and middle class people.

"Every year it happens just a week or two before the Ramadan and there is no exception this year as well," said Mohammad Munir, a primary schoolteacher who was shopping for Iftar items at Reazuddin Bazar on Saturday.

Prices of Iftar items like chickpea (chhola), white pea (motor), khesari (one kind of pulse), onion, dun pea and dates have already gone up in kitchen markets.

But the prices of several items have reduced remarkably in the wholesale market, said the wholesalers.

They said though these com-



A grocery shop in the port city.

modities, widely used during this holy month in particular, are abundant in the market their prices have increased.

Shoppers at kitchen markets during last three days buying items for Iftar and Sehri found prices unusually high.

Chickpea, imported from Australia, vastly consumed during the Ramadan was sold at Tk 66 to Tk 68 per kg at Reazuddin Bazar on Sunday, which was Tk 63 a week ago.

The price was Tk 59 per kg a month ago, showed a statistics at the district marketing office.

However, chickpea was sold at a reduced price of Tk 56.27 per kg in the wholesale market at Khatunganj the same day while it was Tk 58.15 last week.

The wholesale rate of different quality of chickpea has

already decreased by around Tk 2 per kilogram in last three days, said Ahmad Rashid Amu, proprietor of M/s Abdus Salam Sowdagar and also the General Secretary of Chittagong Dal (pulse) Mill Traders Association, while talking to this correspondent.

Like chickpea another necessary item for Iftar, khesari -- used to prepare 'piazo' -- was sold at Tk 29.74 per kg at wholesale market while the price was Tk 30.81 last week, sources said.

But the retailers at different city markets were selling khesari at Tk 34.

"The sale is not up to the mark compared to previous years as buyers from outside the city are yet to come, forcing the wholesalers to sell their goods in reduced rates, said Md Jamal Hossain, General Secretary of

Chaktai Industries and Traders' Association.

The retailers, however, could not show any reason for the price hike.

Onion was being sold in retail markets at Tk 33 to Tk 34 per kg at Karnaphuli Market, Reazuddin Bazar and Bakshirhat while it was only Tk 28 to Tk 30 five to six days ago.

The prices of quality dates, imported from Saudi Arabia, marked a sharp rise to reach Tk 80 to Tk 100 while it was Tk 60 ten days ago.

Rasel Anwar, a shopper at Reazuddin Bazar, said the prices of dates might increase more within a few days.

Besides, prices of different items varied at different markets in the port city. Essential items like ginger were being sold at Tk 44 to Tk 45 per kg at

Reazuddin Bazar while it was Tk 50 to Tk 52 at Karnaphuli Market.

Several traders and common people at city markets said a section of traders are now busy in making profit targeting the holy month.

"They wait for the opportunity to cash in on the holy month of self-restraint," said Mahbuba Abida, a housewife.

Farida Begum, also a housewife, said she might have to curtail her Iftar menu this year due to price hike of essentials that she experienced throughout the year.

She urged the district administration as well as Chittagong City Corporation to regulate the market situation in order to keep the prices of commodities especially used in Ramadan at reasonable level.

'91 cyclonic storm still haunts coastal people

Call for construction of more cyclone shelters and repair of existing ones

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR

An inadequate number of cyclone shelters, poor maintenance of the existing ones and lack of plan for setting up new shelters remain a matter of grave concern for the people of the coastal belt in Chittagong.

The existing shelters, mostly set up after 1991 cyclonic storm and several are before the War of Liberation, lie in a miserable state and face manifold problems, sources at District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer (DRRO) in Chittagong said.

With 50 per cent of the around 400 shelters requiring more or less repair work, the people fear large scale of devastation and casualties if the cyclonic storm lashes the coastal areas like that of April 29, 1991.

But, the authorities concerned appear quite indifferent

to the safety of the people who frequently witness loss of lives and properties during natural calamities like flood, cyclone and tidal surge.

Most of the cyclone shelters were constructed by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), Public Works Department (PWD) and Education Engineering Department while some others set up with the financial assistance of Japan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

The shelters have turned into a safe haven for the criminals and the drug peddlers at night-time while they are being used as schools in the daytime.

Around 64 shelters, out of 90, at the offshore upazila of Sandwip are in a vulnerable condition and require immediate repair for keeping them usable for the people of the

highly disaster-prone area.

Ziaur Rahman, Project Implementation Officer (PIO) of Sandwip, said around one lakh people, mostly fishermen and other lower class people, depend on the centres during any natural calamity. He said most of the doors and the windows of these shelters are worn out.

There is a PIO in every upazila for management of the cyclone shelters under the Ministry for Food and Disaster Management.

Mansur-E-Alam, an office assistant of Sitakunda PIO Office, said some of the centres were constructed in 1990 while others before 1965.

"Twenty to 25 per cent of some 3.34 lakh people living in 10 unions under the upazila depend on 57 shelters during any natural disaster here," Alam said.

PIO Mohammad Sattar Ali of

Anwara said 40, out of 60 shelters, need repair so badly while number of the shelters is inadequate for some 1.5 lakh people in the disaster-prone coastal upazila with a population of 3 lakh.

"Several unions in the coastal belt like Roypur, Barkhine and Barashat need more centres as the existing ones can hardly provide them with shelter," Sattar said.

Mohammad Ruhul Amin, DRRO in Chittagong, admitting the inadequacy of shelters and miserable condition of the existing ones, said they have sent a proposal to the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management in this regard in June.

"In the proposal we have recommended for repairing the dilapidated centres and constructing new centres", Ruhul Amin added.



The road in Kadamtali area in the port city lies in a dilapidated condition due to excessive rain, posing danger to the passengers as well as the pedestrians, but the authorities remain indifferent.

the week that was



Winners of Eid Fashion Competition pose for photograph with the guests at the prize giving ceremony at the Institution of Engineers Bangladesh (IEB), Chittagong auditorium on Saturday. Prothom Alo (Alokito Chattagram) organised the event.

STAR PHOTO

Book on Bhasani, Suhrawardy, Bangabandhu launched

Publication ceremony of a book titled "Smriti Minar-e-Maulana Bhasani, Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy, Sheikh Mujib" by veteran journalist Obaidul Haque was held on Saturday at the Engineer Abdul Khaleque Auditorium of CPC, Obaidul Haque is the former president of Chittagong Press Club (CPC).

"Obaidul Haque has mentioned some astonishing yet unknown facts about our three great leaders and personalities in the book with his impressive style of writing," Acting Mayor of Chittagong City Corporation

M Monzur Alam said as the chief guest. Veteran revolutionary Binod Bihari Chowdhury in his speech called the book a 'milestone' of our history.

Noted writers Dr Moniruzzaman and Dr Mahbubul Haque of Chittagong University (CU), CPC President Ali Abbas, former President Abu Sufian, Principal of Agrabad Mahila College Anwara Alam, Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ) President Shahid U Alam and General Secretary of Abosar Sangskritik Gosthi Al Rahman also spoke.

Later, Monzur Alam and Binod Bihari unveiled the cover of the book.

CMCH Leukaemia block renovated

The leukaemia block, which was

opened at the Child Ward of Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) in 1999, has been renovated with modern healthcare facilities.

Health and Family Planning Secretary AKM Jafarullah Khan, inaugurated the renovated block on Friday. Children Leukaemia Assistance & Support Services (Class), an NGO working for the child leukaemia patients, provided financial assistance for setting up the block and around 500 patients have so far received treatment here.

"Taking an initiative is the key to any welfare activities and this is particularly important in health sector," Jafarullah said at the inaugural function, chaired by Class Chairman Osman Gani Mansur.

Chittagong Medical College (CMC) Principal Dr MA Wahab Chowdhury and Head of Child Department Dr

Seminar on industrial safety held

Engineers Institution of Bangladesh (IEB) Chittagong Centre organised two seminars on Thursday.

Taiyabur Rahman, former managing director of Chhatak Cement Company Ltd, and Md Hafizur Rahman, executive director of Summit Group, presented keynote papers on "Industrial Safety Management" and "Scenario of Accident in Bangladesh and Improvement," at the seminars with IEB, Chittagong Centre Chairman M Ali Ashraf in the chair.

Speakers said loss of lives and

properties have alarmingly been increased in Bangladesh, mostly due to negligence and lack of knowledge about preventive measures on the accidents.

"Many disastrous accidents as well as casualties could be avoided if we adhered to the good industrial management and proper construction of the industries as per rule," they said.

Dist bar record room opens

Metropolitan Sessions Judge AKM Anwar Hossain urged the lawyers to discharge their duty with utmost honesty and integrity to establish rule of law and ensure justice.

He said this while he was inaugurating as the chief guest the record room of Chittagong District Bar Association on Wednesday with Association President Muhammad Abdul Quddus in the chair.

"Litigants come to the court in the hope to get justice and they keep great trust in us. So, we must discharge our duties with honesty, sincerity and integrity," he said.

Association General Secretary Sheikh Iftekhar Saimul Chowdhury also spoke.

Call to annul enemy property act

Speakers at the biennial conference of Bangladesh Puja Uddhapan Parishad, Chittagong Chapter urged the government to ensure equal rights as per the Constitution of 1972 of all citizens of the country.

Parishad President Advocate Subhash Chandra Lala chaired the conference held at Muslim Institute Hall on Friday. Central Secretary General of Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha

Christian Oikya Parishad Dr Nim Chandra Bhoomik was present as the chief guest.

The speakers hoped that the present caretaker government would settle all the unresolved issues to ensure equal rights of all citizens irrespective of religions. They demanded annulment of the enemy property act.

Trustee of Hindu Kalyan Trust Prof Aurdhendu Bikash Rudra, Vice President of Bangladesh Puja Parishad Advocate Subrata Chowdhury and Chittagong Divisional Vice President

Prof Ranjit Kumar Dey also addressed the conference.

NCC Bank view exchange meet held

NCC Bank Ltd Chairman Tofazzal Hossain at a meeting on Saturday said high skill coupled with honesty and sincerity of the bankers is the key to success of a quality bank.

He was exchanging views with the branch managers and officials of NCC Bank at a city hotel. Bank's Managing Director Md Nurul Amin presided over the meeting.

"We must render better services to our valued customers, alongside the initiatives to bring about dynamism and more competency to strengthen the image of the bank," Tofazzal said.

Former chairman Principal M Wazirullah Bhuiyan, Deputy Managing Director SM Shamsul Alam, Khatunganj Branch Manager Khan Jahan Khan and Agrabad Branch Manager Nur Ahmed also spoke.



Nahim and Nabila clinch the titles of Mr and Miss Beautiful Chittagong, a beauty contest, held at Chittagong Club on Friday. Portrait, a cultural organisation, organised the contest.