

Consumers deeply hurt by price hike of essentials

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

Consumers called on the administration to rein in the price hike of essentials as a section of traders are in frenzied spree to increase prices of essential food items and commodities in Chittagong ahead of the holy Ramadan showing lame excuse of 'poor supply'.

Consumers stressed the need for immediate measures by the administration to monitor both the wholesale and retail markets to keep the prices within buyers' capacity.

Prices of non-brand edible oil, green chili, vegetables, egg, broiler chicken and different spices went higher last week in Chittagong markets.

People from low-income groups are the worst sufferers as the prices of vegetables are beyond their purchasing capacity. Vegetables are now selling above Tk 20 per kilogram at kitchen

markets including Kazir Dewry Market, Reazuddin Bazar, Karnaphuli CDA Market, Karnaphuli Complex and Bakshirhat.

On a visit to different kitchen markets retailers were found selling lady's finger at Tk 30 to Tk 32 against its previous price of Tk 22, kakrol at Tk 26 to Tk 30 against Tk 20, long bean at Tk 30 against Tk 24, green papaya at Tk 20 against Tk 15, arum at Tk 32, jhinga at Tk 32 and bitter gourd at Tk 30 and cucumber at Tk 26 against its previous price of Tk 18.

Potato price went up to Tk 26 while it was Tk 18 to 20 two weeks ago. Retailers alleged a section of middlemen are behind the price hike of potato despite huge stock at present.

Only pumpkin (misti kumra) is now available and price is below Tk 20 per kg, said Harun, a CNG-run autorickshaw driver at Karnaphuli market. "I have

bought one kilo pumpkin at Tk 18 while other vegetables at higher prices," he added.

Prices of green chili went up to Tk 200 per kg one week ago. It, however, came down to Tk 120 on Tuesday.

Jishu, a retailer, blamed a section of middleman in the wholesale markets for the price hike of chili taking the advantage of poor supply due to incessant rain over the few weeks as well as for the poor import.

Wholesale traders in the Reazuddin Bazar through syndicate increased the price of chili by Tk 100 in a span of four days since July 12, alleged the retailers.

A wholesaler, however, refused the allegation of forming syndicate and blamed the poor supply for the price hike due to rainfall.

Onion is still pricey in the retail markets and selling at Tk 22 to Tk 24 a kg though the price comes down to Tk 16 in Khatunganj Wholesale Market.

Wholesale prices of different non-brand edible oil like palm oil and super palm oil were increased by Tk 100 per maund last week. Palm oil price went up to Tk 2150 from Tk 2060 while super palm Tk 2350.

Traders in different kitchen markets were selling broiler chicken at Tk 125 to Tk 130 per kg while it was Tk 120 last week.

Price of eggs, however, rose by Tk 2 to 4 per half (four pieces) in one week. A dozen of eggs was selling at Tk 100 at the kitchen markets.

Retail price of both Indian and locally produced garlic shot up to by Tk 15 to 30 per kg. Indian garlic was selling at Tk 44 to 48 per kg against Tk 32 to 34 while retail price of good quality local garlic rose to Tk 120 from Tk 90.

Price of Chinese ginger also rose by Tk 6 per kg while it reached at Tk 60 from Tk 54. Good quality ginger from Rangamati was selling at Tk 120.

Giasuddin, a retailer at Karnaphuli market, said poor supply of the items due to incessant rain over the last few weeks caused the price hike.

Shamsuddoha, a wholesaler of Khatunganj, urged the administration to monitor both the markets for keeping the price gap between the two markets at reasonable level.

Kamrul Islam, a banker, echoing the same said if initiatives are not taken soon the price situation might be difficult during the Ramadan.

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCI) President and Awami League lawmaker MA Latif said they will form a monitoring cell comprising wholesalers, retailers, business leaders, consumers' representatives, journalists and lawmakers to keep eye on both the markets from before the Ramadan.



The cage of vultures at Chittagong Zoo. The photo was taken on Monday.

Chittagong Zoo limps, bores visitors with same animals

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR

Chittagong Zoo has been in a bad shape for over 20 years due to negligence of the management as well as the government. The animals and birds have been kept in worn-out cages at the zoo, the lone place for Chittagong people to be acquainted with the wildlife.

The visitors told this correspondent on Sunday that the zoo has been running with same animals and birds that hardly attract them, while noise from nearby hotels has been hampering the tranquil atmosphere.

A shop is running at south corner almost on the iron fence of the zoo allowing the outsiders to enter the zoo without tickets. The hotel owner is using a microphone to attract the visitors from the solitary corner of the zoo.

Besides, the dirty condition of the zoo also discourages the visitors to come again. The waterbody of crocodile was seen full of small aquatic plants while empty bottles of soft drinks were floating on it.

Six large-sized griffon vultures have been kept in a small cage in a very congested manner at the birds' corner. The cage is too small that the vultures cannot open their wings sitting on the designated place inside the cages.

Atiqur Rahman, a student of city's Kazem Ali High School, said they are bored seeing the same animals for long and go to the zoo as there is no alternative to it in Chittagong.

Sayra Jannat, a housewife who came with her two children at the zoo, said her children want to see rhinoceros, hippopotamus, giraffe and other rare animals, which the zoo lacks. She said environment inside the zoo is very dirty and noise from outside breaks the tranquility of the place.

Zoo supervisor Mujibul Haque said a total of 285 wildlife, including 140 birds of 39 species, have been kept in 39 cages in the zoo on an over six acres of land.

He said only 18 staffs, including four office staffs and a security guard, are running the zoo situated alongside the picturesque Foy's Lake while a 30-member managing committee headed by the deputy commissioner (DC) supervise it.

The zoo started its journey on four acres of land on February 28 in 1989 with a pair of monkeys only. It has now tiger, lion, crocodile, peacock, vulture, turtle, heron, gibbon, deer, monkeys, palm civet, fishing cat, bear, leopard cat, and some other common animals and birds.

Sources said people and different organisations have donated most of the animals to the zoo while one Shadhu, who prefers anonymity, topped the list of voluntary donors by giving the highest number of animals and financial help to the zoo.

Dr MM Morshed Chowdhury, the zoo incharge and veterinary officer, said all expenditures from procurement to staffs' salary are to meet from the gate money they earn from on average 1,700 to 1,800 visitors everyday.

He said they are not going for major renovation since a master plan for expanding the zoo is under process. The iron-fence around the zoo has mostly damaged and it would be repaired after expansion of area of the zoo, he added.

In reply to a question on dirty environment inside the zoo, Dr Morshed said some unconscious visitors dump wastage inside the zoo even in the animal cages that cannot be checked properly due to lack of sufficient manpower.

He said the government financial assistance is needed to make the zoo attractive for the animal lovers in Chittagong.



Vegetable shops at city's Kazir Dewri Kitchen Market. The picture was taken on Tuesday.

the week that was

CMP assures traders of checking crimes

Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) Commissioner Md Moniruzzaman assured the businessmen of extending all out cooperation to check crimes, including extortion and mugging in the New Market area.

He was addressing as the chief guest a view exchange meeting organised by Biponi Bitan Merchants Welfare Committee at its office on Monday.

Traders at the meeting discussed different problems, including the rise of mugging and extortion in and around the market.

They sought help from the law enforcing agency to stop eve teasing and prevent hawkers in front of the market.

Moniruzzaman said they would take necessary action to help maintain the environment in the market congenial for business.

Deputy Commissioner (North) Banaj Kumar Majumder, Assistant Commissioner (AC) of Kotwali zone Kazi Helal Uddin, Officer-in-Charge (OC) Kotwali Police Mohiuddin Mahmud, Merchant Committee Vice President Nurul Absar, leaders SM Syed Uddin Ahmad Chowdhury, Md Idris

Khokon and Mostafizur Rahman also spoke at the meeting.

Power situation discussed

Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) leaders and Power Development (PDB) officials at a meeting on Wednesday underscored the need for improving power situation at the garments units.

The meeting held at BGMEA regional office discussed thoroughly irregular power supply, loadshedding and other power related problems.

PDB Chittagong Chief Engineer Sujit Chakma led the PDB team at the meeting chaired by BGMEA first Vice President Nasir uddin Chowdhury.

The PDB chief engineer welcomed the BGMEA initiative to form a coordination cell to help in power distribution and assured them of improving power supply to the garment units through coordinated management of loadshedding.

5 autorickshaw lifters arrested

Police arrested five CNG-run autorickshaw lifters and recovered a stolen three-wheeler from

Comilla in their two-day drive ended on Sunday.

The arrestees were identified as Md Mohiuddin, 42, Javed, 25, Suman, 25, Sohail, 26 and Suman, 27.

Autorickshaw owner Sakina Begum lodged a case with Bayezid Police Station on July 5 complaining that driver Jony went missing with her autorickshaw from the city's Oxigen area.

Police arrested one Javed on Friday morning in this connection and according to his confessional statement raided different areas in the port city and Comilla to arrest others. Police recovered Sakina's autorickshaw from Kaptan Bazar area of Comilla early

hours of Sunday.

Quoting the arrestees Sub-Inspector Abdul Karim said Jony in collaboration with Javed stole the autorickshaw and took it to Feni where they sold it to one Mohiuddin in exchange for Tk 1.25 lakh.

He said the arrestees are members of a syndicate involved in stealing autorickshaw. The driver is absconding, he added.

Islamic banking lauded

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI)

President MA Latif lauded the contribution of 'Islamic Trade Finance' worldwide saying that now-a-days it has become very popular as it offers an excellent alternative of financing to the customers particularly to the Muslims who have reservation against interest based conventional banking system.

"It has been estimated that Islamic banking will have a market value of four trillion dollar by 2010 worldwide and it is expected to capture about 40 to 50 percent of the total savings of 1.3 billion Muslims in the next eight to ten years."

Latif said this while he was inaugurating a daylong ICC

Bangladesh workshop titled "International Trade Payment: Islamic Trade Finance" for the bankers at a local hotel here on Saturday.

He said trade finance and payment is a very old issue in business. Trade finance plays an important role in facilitating trade transaction between buyers and sellers. It is a form of short term banking facility to help the buyers and or sellers in managing its required cash flow in the short run."

For decades banks worldwide have been practising this conventional method of trade financing until recent years with emergence of the Islamic banking system,

Latif said adding that the fundamental difference between the two is in their very concept.

Participants at the workshop said the Islamic banking industry in Bangladesh also continues to show strong growth since its inception in 1983. At present, out of 48 banks, six private commercial banks are operating as full-fledged Islamic banks. Besides, 21 branches of 10 conventional banks are engaged in Islamic banking, they said.

Iqbal Ibrahim Karmally, coordinator of the ICC UAE Banking Commission and head of Trade Finance at Sharjah Islamic Bank, and ICC Bangladesh Secretary Ataur Rahman moderated the workshop and spoke at the inaugural session.

A total of 27 participants from different banks took part in the workshop.

Azad welcomes constructive criticism

Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad urged the journalists to play a role in building nation and create awareness among the people for peace and prosperity of the country.

He called on the journalists for constructive criticism of government through writings along with highlighting the positive news.

He was addressing as the chief guest the publication ceremony of two books of Daily Jugantor Special Correspondent and Chittagong Bureau Chief Jasim Chowdhury Sabuj at Chittagong Press Club auditorium on Saturday.

Azadi Editor MA Malek, Purbokone Editor Taslim Uddin Chowdhury, Commonwealth Journalists' Association global President Hasan Shahriar, AP Bureau Chief Farid Hossain and Chittagong University Bangla Department Prof Mahbubul Haque also spoke at the ceremony with Chittagong Press Club President Abu Sufian in the chair.

Azad said journalists would play a positive role in country's development through free flow of information.

"The government believes in free flow of information and passed the Right to Information Act to ensure objectivity of the information" he said.

"If any one publishes quality newspaper from Chittagong the government will cooperate with them since the 'Vision 2021' of the government includes expansion of newspaper industry along with ensuring trial of all journalist killings, false cases against them and repression as well," he said.

Later the minister unveiled the cover of the books titled "Unknown Destination and Chittagong: Contemporary Issue" of Jasim Chowdhury Sabuj.



Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad, third from left, unveils the covers of two books of Jasim Chowdhury Sabuj, special correspondent and Chittagong bureau chief of the Daily Jugantor, at a ceremony at Chittagong Press Club on Saturday. On his right are Chittagong Press Club President Abu Sufian and Commonwealth Journalist Association President Hasan Shahriar.

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