

Prices shoot up

FROM PAGE 1
He added aubergines sold at Tk 40 a kg yesterday but at Tk 30 only a week back.
"Why should vegetable prices go up within a few days despite adequate supply?" Mawla said. "The fixed-income people find the situation too tough to survive."

At Karwan Bazar, retailers charged Tk 25-30 for four pieces of bigger-size lemons instead of Tk 15 two days ago.
According to the Department of Agricultural Marketing, green chilli yesterday sold for Tk 60-70 a kg -- 18.18 percent higher over the previous year.

To help boost supply during the Ramadan, the government has already imposed a ban on export of green chilli, aubergine, onion and garlic until August 31.

In April-June of just concluded fiscal year, gram imports stood at 58,130 tonnes, up from 39,081 tonnes of the same period last year, according to Chittagong customs data.

The latest imports reflect a surplus compared to the demand for gram estimated at 50,000 tonnes during the month of Ramadan, according to Bangladesh Tariff Commission, which monitors the essentials prices on behalf of the government.

Gram, a key item for iftar, was selling at Tk 90-100 a kg at the city's retail markets yesterday; it is nearly 25 percent

higher than the wholesale prices.

"Today we are selling gram at Tk 78-79 each kg at wholesale market," said Shafi Mahmud, president of Bangladesh Pulses Traders Association. "So, there is no reason to sell gram at 25 percent profit margin."

Wholesalers at Karwan Bazar were selling cucumber at Tk 20 each kilogram yesterday, but retailers increased the price to up to Tk 40 at different markets.

Traders cited a number of reasons -- higher transport costs, extortion by law enforcement agencies and ruling party men and shop rent hike -- behind the price gap between retail and wholesale markets in the capital.

The TCB data also show the lentil price rose by 22.70 percent to Tk 112-115 a kg over the previous year.

Four pieces of eggs are sold Tk 34-35; the price was Tk 24-25 last year.

ITEMS	NOW	A YEAR AGO
GRAM	Tk 90-100	Tk 70-82
CUCUMBER	Tk 35-40	Tk 18-25
AUBERGINE	Tk 40-50	Tk 30-40
LENTIL	Tk 112-115	Tk 90-95
PACKED EDIBLE OIL (5 LITRE)	Tk 670-680	Tk 585-605
GREEN CHILLI	Tk 60-70	Tk 50-60
EGG (4 PIECES)	Tk 34-35	Tk 24-25
POTATO	Tk 24-26	Tk 13-15
LEMON (4 PIECES)	Tk 25-30	Tk 15-20

One killed as Magura AL factions clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

A sexagenarian man was killed and 10 others were injured in a clash between the supporters of two factions of Awami League at Nohata bazaar in Mohammadpur upazila of Magura yesterday morning.

The deceased Nurul Biswas, 60, was a day labourer and hailed from Nohata village in the upazila. The clash ensued hours after an altercation between the groups over establishing supremacy in the bazaar area on Thursday night, locals said.

Sources said there was a longstanding rivalry between Mustafa Siddiquee Liton, former organising secretary of Nohata union unit of AL, and Md Ali Mian, former secretary of the same unit of AL.

Around 9:30am yesterday, supporters of Mustafa and Md Ali, equipped with sharp weapons and sticks, attacked each other in the bazaar.

They also vandalised shops of their rivals and looted goods, witnesses said.

Nurul Biswas was caught in the hour-long clash and died on the spot. Ten supporters of both the groups also sustained injuries, they said.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Twenty shops in the bazaar were ransacked and looted, police said.

Mohammad Sagir Mian, officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station, said additional police forces have been deployed in the area to avert further violence.

The injured were admitted to Magura Sadar Hospital and Mohammadpur Upazila Health Complex.

Trial of anti-Putin punks opens in Russia

AFP, Moscow

Three young Russian women went on trial yesterday on charges of hooliganism for barging into a landmark Moscow church and singing a "punk prayer" calling for the ouster of President Vladimir Putin.

The trio, who face up to seven years in jail, have been held in pre-trial detention since March after the incident in February, and their harsh treatment has become a new rallying cause for the anti-Putin opposition.

Tributes pour

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all the way from California to pay their last tribute to this illustrious man.

The body of Humayun was later taken back to Islamic Funeral Home. Subject to confirmation of air ticket, it will be brought home Sunday.

Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, brother of Humayun and an eminent writer himself, who is now in New York, said the family had been looking for Humayun's wish list and if no such thing was found, the family would collectively decide on the burial.

The renowned writer and filmmaker passed away at Bellevue Hospital, New York on Thursday around 11:20pm BST (1:20pm EST). He was fighting colon cancer. According to hospital records, he succumbed to Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome.

On Thursday morning, Humayun was conscious and responding. Mazharul Islam, publisher of Anya Prokash Publications Ltd and a long-time friend of the writer-filmmaker, recalled: "In the morning the doctors had been tending to him. Humayun had been admitted to Bellevue Hospital for the last three weeks and was kept under heavy sedatives. Even after several surgeries, he was sharp and alert. The doctors told him and those close that his kidney and heart were still working well."

But soon, his lungs were attacked by a foreign infection and with time the artist was put on a ventilator to help him breathe. From 10:00am EST, Humayun's health started declining. Soon the lungs stopped taking oxygen, even with the help of the ventilator. At 1:20pm EST, the genius breathed his last. A minute later, doctors announced him gone.

His wife Meher Afroz Shaon, brother Zafar Iqbal, sister-in-law Yasmeen Haque, mother-in-law Thohura Ali MP, friend Mazharul Islam, his childhood friend, Fangshu Mondul were with him up to the last moment.

As the news of his demise spread, Bishwajit Saha, proprietor of publication house Mukto dhara, and MA Mumen, permanent representative to the United Nations, rushed to the hospital. Fans and reporters also congregated at the hospital but they were not allowed inside. This, however, could not hold the huge number of Bangalees thronging from adjacent areas. As the area was being cleared, Humayun was taken to Jamaica's Islamic Funeral Home.

Date, another iftar item, is trading at Tk 300; during the last Ramadan the price was Tk 250.

However, the prices of some vegetables and spices such as potato, onion and garlic remained stable yesterday.

Despite a rise in supplies, sugar price also spiralled yesterday. At retail shops, it was between Tk 55 and Tk 56 a kg or 5.71 percent higher compared to the previous month.

To keep the sugar price stable during the Ramadan, the government slashed it by Tk 5 per kg on Wednesday. The state-run Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation was selling each kg of sugar at Tk 55 instead of Tk 60 on retail.

The price of loose cooking oil remained unchanged but that of packed cooking oil rose in the last few days. For a 5-litre can of edible oil, retailers charged Tk 670-680, which was Tk 650-660 a week ago.

The demise of the enormously popular novelist cast a gloom over the two-story building. Trying to look at ease, Humayun's younger brother cartoonist Ahsan Habib was receiving visitors.

"I am the unfortunate one to first tell my mother that Humayun is no more," Ahsan said. "Ma became silent, numb with shock..."

"My brother Zafar Iqbal had to tell her of my father's death and this time it is me..."

Humayun's another maternal uncle Mahbunnabi Sheikh, who was also present, said, "Ayesha aka [elder sister] had often fainted... I couldn't dare meet her. What should I tell her?"

Humayun always wanted to share joy with all his relatives, he added. "Whenever Humayun heard of any problem, he rushed to our house at Mohonganj of Netrakona. He always took care of us despite being very busy."

Nurul Haque, assistant director of Nuhash Palli, said, "Sir was a tree-lover. Whenever he came here, he looked after his trees. I used to prepare tea for him. It is very sad that he would not come here anymore..."

Ahsan Habib said Humayun Ahmed's body would arrive around 1:30pm tomorrow. It would be taken to the Central Shaheed Minar the next day for people to pay their last tribute.

He could not say for sure where his brother would be buried.

"Nuhash Palli officials said my brother wanted to be buried at Nuhash Palli. But the decision will be finalised once Zafar Iqbal returns home Sunday [tomorrow]," he added.

However, Humayun Ahmed told journalists on May 12 that he would like to be buried elsewhere than Nuhash Palli.

Aged 64, the litterateur died at Manhattan's Bellevue Hospital in New York Thursday night after suffering from colon cancer, leaving behind millions of fans and well-wishers.

Cops beat

FROM PAGE 20
informal Bangla connotation of 'You', which felt inappropriate to me as far as office norm is concerned. So I protested his arrogance.

"At this, he sprang up off his seat and pulled me by my collar and slapped me on the face. He was swearing the whole time," Israfil continued, "Izzazur then asked a constable to put me in the lockup. The policeman kicked me on the back and threw me into the prison."

"How dare you teach me how to behave in a police station," Israfil quoted Izzazur as saying when he was being thrown into the lock-up.

He said by this time the officer-in-charge (OC) of the police station appeared in the scene and Israfil gave him his identity.

In response, the OC said he had just arrived from Gopalganj and did not care who the victim was related to, said Israfil.

He claimed that the OC had also threatened to file a case against him on charge of attacking police inside a police station.

Contacted, the second officer said, "It was just a misunderstanding and the matter was settled soon as his identity was confirmed."

Asked whether a second officer was allowed to address a service seeker as tumi, Izzazur kept from responding.

Meanwhile, The Daily Star could not reach the Rupnagar OC for comments despite repeated attempts.

Eternal rest

FROM PAGE 1
maternal uncle of the bestselling author of numerous books, said yesterday as he narrated the prank of four years ago.

Humayun often took his relatives and friends to Nuhash Palli that he built on a 40-bigha land at Pirujali in Gazipur saal forest. "We had a lot of fun there," Nurunnabi said.

He added Humayun loved nature and there are around 250 rare species of trees, mostly planted by the writer-filmmaker, at the Palli.

"Humayun was a great soul. He wanted to live with all around him, surprise others and make others laugh," he told The Daily Star at the Mirpur residence of Humayun's mother yesterday.

The demise of the enormously popular novelist cast a gloom over the two-story building. Trying to look at ease, Humayun's younger brother cartoonist Ahsan Habib was receiving visitors.

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Syria starts all-out

FROM PAGE 20
State television trumpeted the news of the military's Damascus offensive.

Reporters taken on a regime-organised trip saw three bodies, empty streets, shuttered shops and buildings pockmarked with bullet holes.

A security services source told AFP the military has launched a general offensive in Damascus.

The assault comes after a Wednesday bombing that killed four senior members of the regime, including the national security chief, who died yesterday.

General Hisham Ikhtiyar had been wounded along with Interior Minister Mohammed al-Shaar in the National Security headquarters bombing, which was claimed by the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

Defence Minister General Daoud Rajha, President Bashar al-Assad's brother-in-law Assef Shawkat and General Hassan Turkmani, head of the regime's crisis cell on the uprising, were all killed in the explosion.

A state funeral was held for the three in Damascus yesterday.

After Wednesday's bombing, a security source warned that the regime would step up its operations against the rebels.

"The army has so far exercised restraint in its operations, but after the attack, it has decided to use all the weapons in its possession to finish the terrorists off," the source said.

State television broadcast footage it said was from Damascus showing weaponry reportedly captured from rebels, including material marked "Made in USA," as well as scenes of prisoners seated on the ground, their hands bound.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that regime forces also stormed the Jubar neighbourhood of Damascus.

The Observatory said that nationwide it had confirmed 138 dead yesterday, including 41 civilians, seven of them children.

It said 302 people were killed on Thursday, the dead-

liest day of the uprising so far.

On Thursday, Iraq's deputy interior minister Adnan al-Assad told AFP that the FSA had seized control of all crossings along their common border.

An AFP photographer reported that FSA fighters fought a raging battle with Syrian troops at the Bab al-Hawa border post with Turkey and that some 150 rebels controlled the crossing on Friday.

In Moscow, foreign ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashchikov called Western criticism of its decision "absolutely unacceptable."

However, Russia will delay its controversial shipment of three attack helicopters to Syria until security is restored there, the Interfax news agency reported on Friday, quoting an unidentified military source.

Up to 30,000 Syrians have fled into Lebanon over the past 48 hours, the UN refugee agency said.

Syrians are also fleeing towards Turkey, Jordan and Iraq, it added.

US finds rights not well

FROM PAGE 20
Labour Affairs, told the Congress hearing on human rights situation in Bangladesh, "Working with colleagues at the State Department we reached out to leading companies within days of the Aminul Islam murder."

Aminul, a local leader of Bangladesh Centre for Workers Solidarity (BCWS), one of the most important and credible local partners of the US advancing labour rights in Bangladesh, was found tortured and murdered after having been engaged in efforts to help factory workers form a union.

Robert O Blake, Jr, assistant secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, also voiced concerns over the involvement of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in extrajudicial killings and disappearances.

He also said Secretary of State Hillary Clinton noted the US concern about the murder of labour rights activist Aminul and the disappearance of opposition leader Ilias Ali.

"The rights of workers were also front-and-centre on the Secretary's visit to Bangladesh. We have urged the government of Bangladesh to allow workers to freely form unions, and allow organisations that seek to protect worker's rights to operate freely."

"This is not only an ethical question, but also one that has the potential to have a huge impact on the Bangladeshi economy," he said.

Blake also said American and other foreign buyers were increasingly unwilling to have their valuable brand names associated with abuse of workers' rights and it was clearly in Bangladesh's interests to make progress on this issue.

The ready-made garments industry employs millions of Bangladeshis, 90 percent of who are women.

At the hearing, Biel said, "Violations in key sectors like ready-made garments and shrimp remain widespread, and the still-unresolved killing of Aminul Islam raises new concerns that those advocating on the front lines for the interests of Bangladeshi workers may remain targets of powerful interests opposed to such reforms."

"We join the Department of State in our commitment to continue to closely monitor the ongoing investigation of the Aminul killing in order to ensure transparency, accountability, and justice for his family, his colleagues at the BCWS, and others engaged in the effort to advocate for workers in Bangladesh and improve working conditions and their overall quality of life."

He said the concerns about labour rights in Bangladesh were significant and cut across key sectors of the Bangladesh economy. They included violations of freedom of association and unsafe working conditions in the rapidly-growing garment sector, as well as child labour in the "informal" garment sector, he said.

He said there were similar kinds of violations in shrimp

farming and processing sectors; and widespread violations of freedom of association in the country's export processing zones (EPZs), which are governed by a separate set of labour laws.

The US official claimed that the US-based BCWS' advocacy for workers had made it the target of government hostility. "For example, the government has deregistered BCWS and, in 2010, filed criminal charges against its leaders. Those charges have yet to be dismissed, despite an absence of any clear evidence to support them."

The US official said they would continue to press senior government officials of Bangladesh for a resolution that would enable the BCWS to continue its important work.

Biel hinted that the US could use the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) programme, through which the US provides unilateral trade preferences to developing countries, to establish internationally-recognised workers' rights in Bangladesh.

The US had been engaged in a formal review of Bangladesh's compliance with the GSP eligibility criteria since 2007, when the AFL-CIO filed a petition alleging serious violations of labour rights in the country.

"That review continues," said Biel, according to the website of the US Department of Labour.

He said there were an estimated 3.5 million workers in the RMG sector. The recent growth in the sector had come with a high cost in terms of worker injuries and even deaths due to factory fires and other unsafe working conditions.

Biel also told the hearing that leading brands that source from Bangladesh have recently spoken out about labour violence, unsafe working conditions, and other labour rights concerns.

He said, "Trade associations representing major apparel, retail, footwear, and licensing industries doing business in Bangladesh wrote to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April 18 expressing deep concern about the killing and calling for a comprehensive, impartial, and prompt investigation followed by accountability for the perpetrators."

On June 21, a large group of key buyers of apparel and textile products from Bangladesh again wrote to the prime minister, highlighting in particular that the government of Bangladesh had not established any mechanism to adjust the minimum wage upward in order to keep pace with inflation and help address the basic needs of the workers, he said.

The top global apparel buyers who had met in Dhaka recently were also due to write to the prime minister about the conditions of the garment and textile sectors and the prospects of their business in Bangladesh.

Biel said buyers, particularly in the RMG sector, should do more to leverage their market power to help improve the labour conditions in Bangladesh.

The US is the single largest

export destination for Bangladeshi garment items. The EU comprises 55 percent of the sector's annual export volume.

HRW ON BANGLADESH
The US government should continue to press Bangladesh to improve on labour issues and women's rights, reform abusive security forces, and meet its obligations to refugees, Human Rights Watch said yesterday.

In a hearing before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission of the US Congress, John Sifton, Asia advocacy director of the US-based HRW, said, "The people of Bangladesh have suffered a great deal of human rights abuses under successive governments, abuses that have all too often been ignored outside of the country."

He also said, "The situation in the country deserves regular and high-level attention from the US, the UN, and others."

Sifton outlined key areas of concern in his testimony, including the murder of a prominent labour rights activist, harassment of domestic rights groups, ongoing abuses by Rab, the need to repeal antiquated discriminatory laws, and the country's failure to provide refuge to ethnic Rohingya fleeing Myanmar.

Rab arrests

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were holding an anti-government rally.

The law enforcers also recovered leaflets and other publications of the banned organisation from their possession.

During the preliminary questioning, all the arrestees had admitted their involvement with the outfit, Rab officials said.

Around 11:30pm on Thursday, a team of Rab-2 conducted a drive at New Market area and arrested Dr Md Manirul Haque, 27.

Following information extracted from Manirul, Rab officials raided Mohammadpur and Dhanmondi areas early yesterday and captured three operatives of the outfit.

The elite force recovered a large number of jihadi books, magazines, leaflets, a laptop and a personal computer from their possession.

Raihan Uddin Khan, senior ASP of Rab-2, told The Daily Star that the arrestees had been carrying out organisational activities secretly for a long time.

"Recently, the outfit has been engaged in bringing out impromptu procession, pasting posters on walls and distributing leaflets. That is why we have strengthened our intelligence operations," he said.

The activities of the banned outfit have not stopped though their top leaders are still behind bars, the ASP said.

The operatives have been conducting motivational activities targeting school, college and university students in a bid to increase the number of their members, he added.

Gunman kills

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spokesman said the president has cut short his campaign trip to return to Washington.

The shooter, identified by US media as 24-year-old James Holmes, was arrested shortly on the spot after the shootings spree, police said.

"Police were told the suspect 'appeared' at the front of one of the theatres, threw some type of gas or explosive device and started shooting," said an Aurora Police Department state ment.

"When the suspect was arrested, police recovered one rifle, one handgun and a gas mask. A third gun is still inside the theatre. The suspect ... offered no resistance when he was arrested," it added.

Ten people were killed at the scene, police said, announcing the overall death toll to at least 12. Earlier they had said at least 14 died. A local children's hospital reported six victims, the youngest aged six.

Aurora police chief Dan Oates added that there was "no evidence" of a second killer, after earlier reports of two shooters.

He said the suspect had claimed to have explosives at his residence and that the apartment complex where he lived had been evacuated and was being searched.

Chris Jones, who was in the theatre, said the shooting began about 20 to 30 minutes into the screening.

"People just started dropping. We were on the floor trying not to get shot," Jones told the local KMGH-TV television station.

Witnesses described chaos chillingly similar to that depicted in the Batman films -- in which maniacal villains terrorize Gotham City -- suggesting the movie could have inspired the shootings spree.

Police did not provide details about the killed and wounded, but the PG-13 film would have attracted scores of teenagers.

Stop sale

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of them have been dying silently every year, added the speakers.

They demanded the authorities deal out serious punishment to the persons involved in food adulteration.

Stopping chemical contamination of food is imperative to ensure supply of safe food. If it can be ensured, diseases like cancer, cholera, jaundice, gastric, liver cirrhosis, kidney related complications and different kinds of heart problems