

Onion of discord

Consumers in 8 northern districts are deprived of 'fair price' as TCB, dealers at loggerheads

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Consumers in eight northern districts are deprived of 'fair priced' onion imported by Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) as listed dealers are unwilling to draw onion from government godowns.

The dealers alleged that unreasonable conditions imposed by TCB authorities make them incur loss.

A kg of onion is now selling in open markets at Tk 70-Tk 75 in the area.

The government decided to import onion from India and other countries and sell them in open markets to contain onion prices prior to Eid-ul-Azha.

From September to first week of October, regional office of TCB in Rangpur received only 48 tonnes of imported onions in three phases to distribute in Rangpur, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh and Nilphamari districts, sources said.

Due to poor availability, regional TCB arranged selling of onion at Tk 55 per kg in the eight district towns only, instead of supplying it to 58 upazilas under the division.

For this, TCB selected only 19 dealers out of total 346 and a dealer was given allotment of 300-400 kg, three times each.

One of the selected dealers Satyendra Nath Roy, 35, owner of Ovi Enterprise in Nilphamari, said, "I drew 400 kg of onion only once. After spending a good amount as cost for transportation and others to take it



PHOTO: STAR

Imported onions, supplied by Trading Corporation of Bangladesh, become repulsive to the dealers as a portion of it is already rotten. The photo was taken from a dealer's shop in Nilphamari town.

to Nilphamari, I found that a portion of the onion was rotten. As I incurred loss, I did not, feel like drawing onion and other items although TCB allocated them thrice for me by this time."

Another TCB dealer of the region Rahmatullah Ruhul, owner of Messers Abdul Mannan said that as condition of receiving the small quantity of allotted onion, authorities compelled the dealers to receive other items like sugar, soybean oil and lentil but the items are of poor quality and prices higher than that in the open market.

A number of TCB dealers of different districts on condition of anonymity alleged that a group of Rangpur based traders with the help of a section of offi-

cials create situation to discourage genuine dealers to draw TCB supplied goods like imported onion and others.

This is done to sell the items for high prices later, they said.

Sujauddoula Sarkar, executive officer of Rangpur regional office of TCB, said, "Dealers were given allotment of imported onion in proportionate to availability and they were not intentionally given small allotment. TCB deals with onions as well as different essential commodities, which dealers must draw as a package according to rule."

He, however, admitted that a portion of the onion might have been rotten as TCB has no cold storage and the item could not be preserved more than three days.

Jatka catching with banned nets, fish looting by intruders go on

HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

A section of fishermen have continued catching jatka (hilsa smaller than inches) alongside larger fishes with banned categories of nets in different rivers of the district.

Meanwhile, disturbance by robbers and frequent intrusion of Indian fishermen into Bangladesh waters remain the causes of concern for local fishermen.

During a recent visit to Kawcha, Sandha and Baleshwar rivers, this correspondent saw a large number of fishermen catching fish with banned current nets and bandha nets (a kind of fishing net kept tied in the river to trap small sized fishes) are being used in catching fish. Bandha nets also cause damage to eggs of fish.

The fisheries department seems indifferent to such illegal fishing for reasons unknown.

Because of use of banned fishing nets, the genuine fishermen are facing intolerable suffering, as they do not get expected fish from their legal nets.

"We do not get our expected fish, as the river is full of banned current and 'bandha' fishing nets," alleged Abdul Alim, a fisherman in the Kawcha river.

"Only five percent fishermen are benefited through using banned nets while other 95% face problems for them," said district fisheries officer Oliur Rahman.

"Sometimes we conduct drives by mobile courts and seize banned nets and damage them. But due to lack of manpower we cannot do it regularly," he added.

Several fishermen returning from the Bay of Bengal

alleged that Indian fishermen often enter 50-60 kilometres inside Bangladesh sea area and catch fishes there freely.

"Illegal fishing by Indians disturbs Bangladeshi fishermen. They damage our fishing nets and boats, even beat us

trawler owners' association of Sharonkhola upazila in Bagerhat over mobile phone.

"Forest robbers belonging to gangs led by Shirsho, Jahangir, Alif, Amir recently kidnapped 67 fishermen and demanded Tk 1-1.5 lakh for release of each. And

disturbance by Indian intruders adds to our woes," said Md Anwar Hossain, president of fish wholesalers association in Sharonkhola.

Contacted, Captain M Mazedul Haque, commander of Coastguard west zone said, "I am yet to get

any such allegation of intrusion by Indian fishermen. However, I will look into the matter."

"We arrange patrol regularly in the rivers for fishermen's safety from the robbers and the success rate is praiseworthy," he added.

Jatka along with big sized hilsa are on sale at Chandipur Bazar in Zianagar upazila under Pirojpur district. A section of fishermen have continued ignoring the ban on netting the fishes smaller than nine inches long.



PHOTO: STAR

if we protest," Shahadat Hossain, a fisherman returning from the sea said at Parerhat fisheries port in Pirojpur.

"Indian fishermen's illegal entrance to Bangladesh sea area increases during the peak hilsa catching season. The Indians also take opportunity during the ban period of catching fishes. Our fishermen dare not protest as often 25-30 Indian trawlers stay together," said Abul Hossain, president of

Jewellers protest robbery, keep shutters down

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Jewellery shop owners yesterday kept their shutters down protesting the Sunday's robbery at M Hossain and Brothers Jewellers at Ganginarpar in the town.

The robbers looted gold ornaments and cash worth Tk two crore from the shop, police said quoting the owners.

Four people, identified as A Kabir, proprietor of the shop and Gadashwar Karmaker, Abu Taleb and Russell, three employees of the shop, were stabbed during the incident.

Abdul Quyyum, son of A. Kabir lodged a case with Kotwali police station yesterday afternoon.

Protesting the incident, jewellery owners and workers brought out a procession in the district town yesterday noon. During the demonstration, they threw brickbats at police when the law enforcers intercepted the procession at Ganginarpar intersection.

The protesters demanded immediate arrest of the robbers and recovery of the looted gold. They also vowed to go for tougher movement in case the



PHOTO: STAR

Jewellery shop owners and workers bring out a procession in Mymensingh town yesterday demanding arrest of the robbers who looted gold ornaments and cash worth Tk 2 crore from a jewellery in the town on Sunday.

demand goes unheeded.

Chandan Kumar Ghosh, secretary of Bangladesh Jewellers Samity, Mymensingh unit, said three daring robberies took place since February this year but no looted gold was recovered.

Robbers looted Labonya Shilpalaya at Durgabari of the town on September 3. But the ornaments worth Tk. 15 lakh are yet to be recovered, he said.

He further said that a gang took away gold ornaments and cash worth Tk. two crore from Alim Jewellers at Imperial Super

Market on February 11, exploding several cocktails.

In the last three years, at least seven such robberies were committed in Durgabari and Ganginarpar areas, the heart of the town, Chandan said, adding that cases were lodged every time but no gold was recovered.

Due to frequent robberies, panic has gripped hundreds of people linked to jewellery business in some 250 shops in Mymensingh town, said another leader, demanding proper security measures 'right now' so that the jewellers could continue their business without fear.

SNAPS AND SNIPPETS

Acid attack on housewife

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A housewife sustained burn injuries in an acid attack allegedly by mother-in-law under Ullapara upazila of Sirajganj district on Sunday morning. The victim is AP Khatun, 25, wife of Abdur Rahman of Talukderpara village. She was admitted to Bogra Medical College and Hospital. Officer in-charge of Ullapara police station Md Tazul Huda said mother-in-law Roma Khatun threw acid on AP Khatun following an altercation over a trivial matter at 11:00am. Police arrested Roma and Abdur Rashid, brother-in-law of the victim, in connection with the incident.

Schoolboys caned

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Two students were caned and injured allegedly by the president of a school managing committee in Kulaura upazila on Sunday. The injured are Pervez Reza, and Ruel Hosain Munna, students of class X at Dildarpur High School in the upazila. They were admitted to the upazila health complex. Headmaster Rupia Begum said Mujibur Rahman beat up the duo mercilessly in front of everyone as they quarreled with two other students over sharing seats of a bench. Despite repeated calls, this correspondent could not reach Mujibur as his phone remained switched off.

Fishermen freed, robbers held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bhola

Members of Bangladesh Coastguard rescued five abducted fishermen from the den of robbers near River Meghna in Dhalchar area between Hatiya and Bhola on Sunday afternoon. They also arrested two robbers along with two rifles, two revolvers, one shot gun and eight lethal weapons. The arrestees are Jahangir, 30, and Sujun, 35, members of notorious Kalam gang. On secret information, a team, led by Lt Mostafizur Rahman, raided the area and rescued the fishermen.



A section of teachers of Pabna University of Science and Technology besiege the controller's office yesterday, keeping the university proctor, deputy controller of examinations, a faculty dean, students' adviser, and five members of the examination committee confined there. They protested the university authorities' refusal to supply question papers to the halls of third year final examinations scheduled yesterday. The authorities, on the other hand, said the question papers were not supplied as only a few students came to appear at the examinations amid boycott by most examinees.

PHOTO: STAR

Abducted baby, girl rescued

UNB, Chandpur

An eight-month-old girl, who was abducted from Araihaaj upazila of Narayanganj on Friday, was rescued from a village of Kochua upazila of Chandpur on Saturday.

Police also arrested a man in connection with the abduction.

The rescued girl was identified as Meem, daughter of Mohammad Yasmin Miah of Bokadikanda area in Araihaaj upazila.

Meem's mother Shahnaz Begum said that their neighbour Nazmul Hassan, 19, took Meem to a shop to buy her biscuits and since they remained missing.

Despite frantic searches in all possible places, neither Nazmul nor the child could be found.

Later, Meem's father got information that Nazmul had taken his daughter to Sengua village in Kochua upazila of Chandpur and offered to sell her to one Zakir Hossain of the village.

Informed by Yasmin, Kochua police raided the house of Zakir, rescued the girl and arrested alleged abductor Nazmul on Saturday.

In another incident, police rescued a schoolgirl from Shiromoni area in Khulna city on Sunday morning, 12 hours after her abduction from Barandi Mollapara area in Jessore town.

The law enforcers also arrested Maniruzzaman, 40, son of Akkel Ali of Baropata village in Khulna city, in connection with the abduction.

Police said Khoka and his men picked up the girl on Saturday evening and took her to Khulna city.

Victims' father Tofayel Hossain filed a case against them with Kotwali Model PS in Jessore.

Later, on secret information, police rescued the girl from the area and arrested Maniruzzaman, brother of Khoka, on Sunday morning.