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PRICES SKYROCKET

Shutdown snaps supply chain of vegetables

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the 60-hour hartal disrupting supplies, consumers are feeling the pinch of soaring prices of vegetables and other kitchen items in city markets.

Prices of green chilli, brinjal, beans, cauliflower, cabbage, greens, ridge gourd, onion, garlic and ginger shot up yesterday amid falling supply.

Transportation of goods came to a halt as the truckers did not operate their vehicles fearing arson attacks by opposition activists during the shutdown enforced by the BNP-led 18-party opposition alliance.

Traders said prices of almost all the vegetables increased by Tk 10 to Tk 15 per kilogram on an average due to supply dearth.

When it came to green chilli, bitter gourd and beans, the hike was much higher.

Green chilli was selling at between Tk 160 and Tk 180 a kg yesterday against Tk 80 to Tk 90 two days ago. Bitter gourd was sold at Tk 80 a kg yesterday, up from Tk 50 on Saturday.

Abdur Rahim, an assistant at an electronics repairing shop at Lalbagh, said he was surprised at the prices of red

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The stock of vegetables runs low at Karwan Bazar wholesale market, as only a few trucks carrying goods could enter the capital in the last two days due to the 60-hour hartal enforced by the BNP-led 18-party alliance.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Hindus targeted, only

Their shops at remote village looted, vandalised

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat and RASHIDUL HASAN

Although many hartals were enforced countrywide in the past, people of Shafinagar in Lalmonirhat had little to worry about as the village is situated in a remote area, nearly 85 kilometres from the district headquarters.

So, they became numb in shock as alleged Jamaat-Shibir-BNP men vandalised local shops of Hindus on Sunday night.

Eyewitnesses told The Daily Star yesterday that equipped with various weapons, a group of 20-25, some masked, also torched the shops and took away groceries and other items worth around Tk 30 lakh.

In the nearly four-hour rampage from around 8:00pm on Sunday, the vandals did not touch any of the 32 other shops owned by Muslims.

"The Jamaat-Shibir and BNP men came chanting

pro-hartal slogan. We shut our shops... They razed our shops despite our repeated requests," he said, even a salon was not spared.

The gang moved towards a neighbourhood of some 50 Hindu families around 1:15am, according to eyewitnesses. But they could not launch an attack as the Muslim neighbours stood by the Hindus and put up resistance.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, many Hindu people said they were still feeling insecure amid threats from the Jamaat-Shibir and BNP men.

"We are being warned with death threats not to disclose names of the miscreants to the police or the press," one of the Hindu people said, adding that Jamaat-Shibir men have been prowling on the edge of Shafinagar village, in Bawra union under Patgram upazila, since Sunday night.

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Modified brinjal finally sees light

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Committee on Biosafety (NCB) yesterday officially released the country's first genetically modified (GM) food crop, brinjal, which is infused with pest-resistant gene.

The decision was taken following a two-day meeting of the NCB, the highest regulatory body for GM crop release, held at the environment ministry with its secretary in the chair.

With this decision, Bangladesh becomes the 29th country in the world to grow GM crop. In South Asia, India, Pakistan and Myanmar grow GM crop cotton. With the NCB nod, Bangladesh becomes the first in the region to grow a GM food crop.

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HARTAL, NO DIALOGUE YET

Commoners aggrieved

ZYMA ISLAM and JAMIL MAHMUD

Every bit of delay the two major political parties make in reaching an agreement over the polls-time government is taking lives of general people, said a pick-up van driver yesterday.

Driver Mohammad Masud, 27, was sitting idle in the capital's Karwan Bazar for the second consecutive day yesterday thanks to the 60-hour hartal imposed by the opposition alliance since Sunday.

"I have no food and money because my truck has not been rolling for the last two days. While on the other hand, our two top leaders are dilly-dallying over when they can have dinner together! Why can't they solve the problem immediately?" he wondered.

On Saturday, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had invited Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia to a dinner the next day. But Khaleda declined to attend it saying that she would not be able to attend the event before October 29 due to the hartal her alliance had imposed.

Hawker Goni Miah was found sitting displaying a selection of herbs on the pavement of the capital's Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue yesterday.

Asked what he thought the two top leaders should do to reach an agreement, he said, "I am not supposed to have an opinion, as I am only a poor hawker, one of the general public."

"She wants a hartal, she gets it. When they hurl crude bombs, I leave everything

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On return from hajj, a group of elderly people is stranded at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, finding no transport on the second day of the opposition's hartal yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Tired hajis toil at airport

SHARIFUL ISLAM and BELAL HOSSAIN BIPLOB

The ongoing 60-hour countrywide shutdown enforced by the opposition has put air passengers, especially homeward bound hajj pilgrims and migrant workers, in a serious trouble as hundreds were stuck in the city.

The pilgrims, who have performed religious rituals during the hajj, had to take shelter at a camp for them in Ashkona in the capital. Many migrant workers were found waiting anxiously at the airport for hours finding no transportation to going home.

Others who have relatives in the city have taken shelter there.

Taking advantage of the situation, CNG-run auto-rickshaws which dared to come out on streets are charging almost three times higher than normal fare.

"I have been in a precarious situation due to the hartal," Aftab Uddin, 55, a pilgrim from Pirganj in Thakurgaon, said.

"I am so exhausted after three days of travel and have hardly any strength left to bear any more sufferings," he said with tears in his eyes.

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Patients in trouble

Fear of violence, lack of transport make it difficult for them to reach hospital

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and TAMANNA KHAN

Fear of violence on the way to hospitals and the small number of vehicles available on the roads during the hartal are making it very difficult for the sick and the injured to get proper medical attention.

On occasion, it becomes life threatening.

Raju Mondol, 16, had an accident at his Dhamrai, Savar, home around 10:00am yesterday. The axe he was chopping wood with got away from him and he cut his leg deeply.

Local doctors asked his guardians to take him to a certain hospital in Dhaka to see if Raju had severed any of his nerves.

But it took Raju's uncle three hours to find a vehicle willing to take Raju to Dhaka, albeit charging almost twice the usual fare for the just-over 30-kilometre trip.

When Raju finally reached National Institute of Traumatology, Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation (Nitor) in Dhaka around 2:00pm, he had become weak due to loss of blood.

Like Raju, many others found it difficult to get to the emergency sections of hospitals.

Nitor's emergency section on an average day deals with more than 110 patients but only 80 patients received medical services yesterday.

Hospital officials pointed out that most of Nitor's patients have fractured

bones and many of them cannot travel on rickshaws, the vehicle most available during hartals. On a normal day, many patients come from outside Dhaka as district hospitals do not usually have all the facilities Nitor provides, they added.

At the emergency section of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, the largest public hospital in the country, 171 patients took treatment in the 12 hours between 12:00am and 12:00pm yesterday.

On a regular day, the section treats around 300 people in those 12 hours.

Many sick people decided to stay put rather than risk going out for medical attention.

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RAMU ATTACKS

Charge sheets in 5 more cases submitted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Police yesterday submitted charge sheets in five more cases filed in connection with attacks and looting of Buddhist temples and houses at Ramu and Ulkhia in Cox's Bazar in September last year.

Charge sheets in twelve

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PRAYER TIMING			October 29
Fajr	4:50	Azan	5:25
Zohr	12:45	Jamaat	1:15
Asr	4:00		4:15
Maghrib	5:32		5:35
Esha	7:15		7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

IN FOND MEMORY

One more year has passed since you left us and our hearts are still beyond repair. The part of us that left with you is still hopelessly lost. Our world even now fails to turn. We miss every single moment, the precious gems you spent with us in your ephemeral life. We do still cherish every fleeting shadow you have draped around us as your blessings. We believe that Allah (SWT) is taking good care of you and pray to Him that you may have eternal peace.

- Your family

We ask all friends and well-wishers of Mr. Imtiyaz Husain to pray for his departed soul and remember him fondly for the good deeds he has done and the hearts he has touched.