

CRACKDOWN ON CHEATS



A day before Ramadan begins, a mobile court yesterday confiscates the scales of quite a number of dodgy traders at Malibagh kitchen market and destroyed a few of them on the spot. The court also found the traders were using incorrect weights and were not following the prices laid out in the chart of the market. In Karwan Bazar, prices of items that are usually on high demand during Ramadan were soaring. A trader is seen calling out Tk 90 for a kg of eggplants, *top right*. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN AND AMRAN HOSSAIN

Prices hiked up to 88pc

FROM PAGE 1
Bangladesh.

“Onion price is increasing mainly due to low production in India,” said Ratan Saha, an onion wholesaler at Shyambazar.

India has recently doubled the minimum export price of onion to \$300 a tonne, he said adding that this is likely to fuel onion price hike in

Bangladesh markets as traders squeeze supply.

Onion imports went up 76 percent in the first 10 months of the outgoing fiscal year and onion worth \$153 million was imported, according to the LC settlement statistics of Bangladesh Bank.

Besides, LCs for importing onion increased by 78 percent and LCs worth \$165 million were opened for import-

ing spices, which are in high demand for preparing iftar items during Ramadan.

The annual domestic demand for onion is 22 lakh tonnes. The country produced 13.58 lakh tonnes in the last season and the rest was imported mainly from India.

The government, however, claimed the country has adequate supply of

onion.

“There is no reason to hike prices ahead of Ramadan as the country has adequate supply of essential items,” the commerce ministry yesterday said in a statement.

Besides, 14 teams of the ministry have already started monitoring the supply and pricing of basic commodities in the city’s kitchen markets, it said.

The ministry also warned traders of punitive actions for any attempt to make too much profit during Ramadan.

The price of bottled cooking oil remained unchanged. A 5-litre jar of edible oil was selling at Tk 545-560 yesterday, the same as a month ago. The prices of gram, lentil and date also remained stable till yesterday.

Meanwhile, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed yesterday said that business leaders have assured him of keeping the prices of essentials at a tolerable level during Ramadan.

Replying to lawmakers’ queries in parliament, Tofail said business leaders, retailers and wholesalers gave this assurance in two meetings with the government on June 9 and March 31.

WAR CRIME SUSPECT

Evidence found against fugitive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

War crimes investigators yesterday said they had found evidence of six war-time offences including the killing of 24 people committed by fugitive war crimes suspect Syed Md Hassan in Tarail upazila in Kishoreganj.

Hassan, 65, alleged commander of Tarail unit Razakar in Kishoreganj in 1971, set a camp of the auxiliary force of the Pakistani occupation army at Tarail Police Station on April 23, 1971.

The offences also include kidnapping of 12 people and torching and looting of 125 houses.

Senior investigators Abdul Hannan Khan and Sanaul Huq gave this information at a briefing at the agency’s Dhanmondi office in the capital yesterday.

Huq said the war crimes suspect had looted and set fire to seven houses of one Hassan Ahmed at Sachail village on April 27.

“He [Hassan] was involved in the killing of Tofazzal Hossain Bhuiyan, abduction of two others and setting fire to two houses at Konabhwail village on August 23, 1971,” the senior investigator said, adding that they had found his “involvement” in killing 12 people and torching of 10 houses at Palpara in Shimulhati village on September 9.

Eight people including Satish Ghosh was killed and 10 others at Bargaon village of Tarail were abducted on September 27. Hassan, whose father was the president of Kishoreganj Peace Committee, was allegedly involved in the incident.

Kamini Kumar Ghosh and Jibon Chakravorty of Araiura village were

abducted and killed on October 8. Ghosh’s six houses were also plundered. Hassan allegedly led the abduction and killings.

Huq said the investigators had found Hassan’s “involvement” in killing Rashid Ali Bepari of Sachail village and setting fire to 100 houses on

December 11.

Around 39 witnesses were likely to testify on the charges, he added.

The agency began its investigation on June 7 last year, completed it on June 19 this year and has submitted a 219-page probe report to the prosecution office of the international crimes tribunals.

On April 3, the International Crimes Tribunal-1 ordered the arrest of Hassan, who has gone into hiding.

In reply to a question, senior investigator Abdul Hannan Khan said they probed war crimes against Jamaat-e-Islami as a party for its role during the Liberation War 1971 as per the provision in the existing International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973.

“The agency has nothing to do with different types of explanations that came up after it submitted the probe report,” he said.

The agency submitted the probe report against Jamaat’s wartime role on March 27.

On May 29, Law Minister Anisul Huq said the war crimes act was not enough to try and punish any political party for its alleged crimes during the Liberation War.

The International Crimes Investigation Agency has so far completed investigation of 20 cases and is looking into 15 others.

Syed Md Hassan

Shamim's arrogance, Bashir's courage

FROM PAGE 1

them wonder if such sentiments were actually coming from the chief of a party which historically had struggled for democratic causes in the country.

Since the prime ministerial pronouncement, nothing has been heard about the investigation into the Toki murder. The inquiry into the seven murders appears to have taken a back seat. The hapless mayor Selina Hayat Ivy has been pushed into a corner where Shamim Osman and the likes of him think she should stay.

For his part, the Awami League lawmaker, lately emboldened by the questionable election of his sibling Selim to the seat of his recently deceased brother Nasim, has engaged freely in a battle against the windmills. When the daily Prothom Alo carried a report of his intercepted telephonic conversation with a fugitive Nur Hossain, Shamim Osman called a press conference to clear his position. And yet he told the media people he had called that he had not read Prothom Alo, indeed he never reads Prothom Alo. Of course, he does not read the Prothom Alo, if he says so. If he does not, then why did he have that meeting with the media soon after the appearance of the report?

And now the MP has gone a step further. He believes that journalists are no better than dogs, that they write anything for money or when they are

ordered to by the owners of the organisations they work for. His interaction with the media has consistently been a one-man show, with him doing the talking and taking no questions. Or, once a question has been placed before him and he has heard it, the answer which comes is a convoluted one, a clear attempt to evade the question.

He dissembles on television. As citizens, you ask: why is he being called to the channels every now and then? He says the prime minister, his “apa”, is with him. Translate that into easy language: if Sheikh Hasina is for him, no one can be against him. That sends out a bad signal, not for Shamim Osman, but for the prime minister. Does she see the damage being done to her and to her government by the man whose family she has vowed to protect?

The decent SM Akram has been made to lose the by-election through his election agents being driven off their polling centres and through his supporters being intimidated into silence. Victory processions for Selim Osman were on the streets the minute polling ended. How did the Osmans know they had won the election even before the votes had been counted?

And did the Election Commission, its position in the public eye sliding rapidly, stop to think of ways of assert-

ing itself and thereby clawing back to a semblance of respectability? The EC did nothing when Akram’s people were run out of their polling stations. It did not warn the Osman followers against a violation of the rules. Would the EC have demonstrated similar pusillanimity had ATM Shamsul Huda and his team still been around?

Shamim Osman had the audacity to hurl abuse at a brave police officer who stood his ground on Election Day. ASP Mohammad Bashiruddin did not allow a union parishad chairman to take over a polling centre where he could stuff the ballot boxes with false votes for Selim Osman. Bashiruddin did what a dedicated, professional and patriotic police officer should do -- check criminality no matter how powerful the place of origin of such ugly manifestations of predatory behaviour.

Shamim Osman has not explained why he threatened this brave young man. Neither has the senior-most police official in Narayanganj done anything to defend his subordinate. The Election Commission, under whose jurisdiction ASP Bashiruddin was carrying out his responsibilities, has seen no reason to speak up for him. Fear is leading to a growth of warped personalities, to a republic of enforced silence.

What if now men infinitely more powerful than ASP Bashiruddin go all

the way to punish him, even destroy his career and therefore his future? What if they give us a new fable, that he is a Jamaati at heart or a BNP man by conviction, despite his old affiliation with the Chhatra League, simply because he dared to deny a lawmaker and his minions access to wrongdoing?

These and similar worries eat into our consciousness day after day, night after night. This is not what we bargained for when we went to war for liberty forty three years ago.

Will the prime minister reassure us that she is with us, the people of this country? Will she revise her decision about the Osmans and enlighten us anew with the thought that democracy is what we will have in Bangladesh, that crime will be handled firmly irrespective of which individuals are involved in its commission, that Narayanganj and this country as a whole will one day return to Bangladesh’s citizens?

We wait for Toki’s murderers to be brought to justice. We will celebrate ourselves when the perpetrators of the seven murders and their godfathers are hauled before the law.

We wait for times when our parliamentarians will make laws for our welfare, not break them for their self-aggrandisement, when true lawmakers will put lawbreakers out of circulation.

Rejoinder, our reply

FROM PAGE 1

“My said client was given sanad [certificate] No Ma-106753 by the Muktiyoddha Bisayak Ministry [Liberation War affairs ministry],” it added.

Mortuza was elected vice-chairman at the June 4 Muktiyoddha Sangsad polls. Borhanuddin Chowdhury, ex-commander of Fatikchhari Muktiyoddha Sangsad, and Najmul Hasan Pakhi, a war hero of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, also contested the election but were defeated, the rejoinder read.

It claimed the two had never before

raised any objection challenging Mortuza’s candidacy. Neither had any other person nor any organisation questioned his prestigious status in the Muktiyoddha parishad.

Mortuza also took part in the 2010 Muktiyoddha Sangsad polls and was elected assistant organizing secretary, it mentioned.

“The false allegations made in the news item have caused a fatal blow to the image of my said client and thereby lowered the prestige and reputation of my said client,” said the rejoinder

signed by advocate Khairul.

It added Mortuza would take legal steps against Borhanuddin and Najmul Hasan Pakhi for “defaming” him if they did not withdraw the “false allegations” bought against him and apologise for their “misdeeds”.

Our Reply

Our report said allegations were rife that SM Mortuza Hossain, who hails from Fatikchhari, Chittagong, was a fake freedom fighter.

Several freedom fighters in his area told The Daily Star that Mortuza might

have received training in India but he never joined the war.

During the war, he along with his elder brother Faruk used to run a tea stall at a training camp at Harina in Sabroom, Tripura, they said, adding he returned to Bangladesh on December 17, 1971, a day after victory was achieved.

In the report, Borhanuddin Chowdhury, ex-commander of Fatikchhari Muktiyoddha Sangsad, confirmed that Mortuza didn’t fight in the war.

Therefore, we stand by our report.

New role for Latifur

FROM PAGE 16

nature and significance of the major shifts taking place in the world economy. It also offers an influential and respected channel for supplying business leadership to help governments manage those shifts in a collaborative manner.

Rahman has served in many important national bodies in various capacities, including president of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry for several terms; president of Bangladesh Employers’ Federation for two terms; and member of executive committee of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry; Bangladesh Jute Mills Association and Bangladesh Tea Association.

In 2012, Rahman was awarded Oslo Business for Peace Award by the Business for Peace Foundation, Oslo, and Business Executive of the Year 2001 by the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh.

He is also the chairman of Nestlé Bangladesh, Holcim Cement Bangladesh, and National Housing Finance & Investments, a director of Linde Bangladesh and a member of the governing body of BRAC.

Transcom Group, which originated with tea plantations in 1885, is now one of the largest conglomerates in Bangladesh, comprising 16 private and public companies employing more than 10,000 people. The Group comprises pharmaceuticals, electronics, media, foods, beverages and consumer products.

The other new members elected by ICC are: Maria Fernanda Garza, CEO of Orestia and chair of ICC Mexico; Dennis M Nally, chairman of PricewaterhouseCoopers International; Yongmaan Park, chairman of Doosan Group; Kasemsit Pathomsak, president of Merchant Partners Securities and chair of ICC Thailand; and Thomas Wellauer, chief operating officer of Swiss Re and chair of ICC Switzerland.

The report said it was not possible to check the leak in the existing system.

At present, a group of trained question setters prepares the questions and sends them for moderation. Another group of trained teachers moderates the questions and prepares four sets. Then the authorities fix two sets through lottery before sending those to the Bangladesh Government (BG) press for printing and packaging.

The committee has suggested reducing the number of these layers.

The education ministry formed the seven-member high-powered committee led by Additional Secretary Sohrab Hossain on April 10, a day after the Dhaka board postponed the exam following reports of English-II question leak.

The English-II exam was held afresh on June 8. The Dhaka board had changed the questions set for May 28 mathematics-II soon after the allegations of leak spread out.

There have been widespread allegations that the questions of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations in February and other papers of Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) were leaked. But the education ministry kept denying the allegations.

Not only in hardcopies, questions were leaked allegedly on Facebook pages and through SMS as well.

Receiving the report yesterday afternoon, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid told reporters at his office that necessary steps would be taken after analysing and evaluating the probe body recommendations critically.

The leak is a black spot in the ministry’s five-and-a-half-year history, he said.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The whole process, including preparation and moderation, will be done online. There will be a question database run by a software. After submission

of the questions in the database by question setters, the moderation part would be done by the software, said the report.

It would take at least two to three years to build such a database, it said.

The question papers would be sent to the centres online on the morning of the morning, said the report. The questions will be stored in encrypted form and decrypted only after getting a certain command.

The centres also will have special setups, including a high-tech printer. The questions will be printed minutes before the start of the exam.

Another recommendation is that grassroots officials will be provided with a protective device to which questions will be sent days before the exams. The device will have a timer to fix when the officials will be able to print the questions after installing the device with printers.

The committee also suggested for-

mulating multiple sets of question papers and selecting one from among them through lottery on the morning of the examination day to avoid any leak.

The probe body also recommended that question setters and moderators compose the questions and BG press only do the printing. Currently, the question setters and moderators send handwritten questions to be composed at the BG press.

Each of the recommendations has challenges, said the report. Above all, honesty is the main thing, the report said.

Sohrab told reporters that, “We took time as we emphasised more on how to check leaks in future.”

He also said the committee tried to incorporate the opinions of teachers, academics and IT experts in the report. Some of the recommendations might not be implemented as they will require electricity, or back-up power supply and internet in each of the exam centres.

How they got leaked stays unknown