

Indian ban

FROM PAGE 1
at Karwan Bazar in Dhaka, said the price of per kg Indian onion was between Tk 60 and Tk 62 yesterday morning.

In the evening, the variety was sold at Tk 80 per kg at Shyam Bazar wholesale market, he said, adding that he was selling the product for Tk 82.

Traders, however, feared that the price may further rise.

In the last consignment, 11 truck loads of onion entered the country and traders who bought the shipment stored them instead of selling them, said Ashadul Islam, an onion importer at Bhomra.

The ban was imposed more than two weeks after India slapped \$850, which is around Tk 71,821, as minimum export price for per tonne of onion.

The export ban made the onion market volatile in Bangladesh as the country meets a portion of its annual demand through imports.

Indian Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution in a statement said the ban on exports would improve domestic availability.

Mohammad Abdul Mazed, general secretary of Shyam Bazar Onion Wholesalers' Association, said wholesale buyers lost their appetite for purchasing in bulks as they fear incurring loss.

Besides, others fear the price would drop suddenly, he added.

Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) Spokesperson Md Humayun Kabir said they would continue selling onions at Tk 45 per kg.

Two ships carrying mostly onions arrived at Chattogram Port from Turkey and Egypt yesterday, he said, adding that the bulb would be sold from 16 TCB trucks in Dhaka.

Consumers Association of Bangladesh President Ghulam Rahman said onion traders hiked prices only to make profit. "It is irrational and has no logic," he said.

Proceedings

FROM PAGE 16
actions against the perpetrators and negligent local administration officials.

The probe reports were submitted later to the HC bench led by Justice Mirza Hussain Haider, who is now a judge of the Appellate Division of the SC. Before the elevation of the judge, the jurisdiction of the bench was reconstituted by the chief justice.

Asked why he had not moved the petition in such a long time, Jyotirmoy Barua said, "I am not taking any move for hearing of the writ petition as the relevant High Court benches are burdened with other cases. I have not been able to find any suitable bench which could hear and dispose of the petitions quickly."

He added that almost all of those accused in the cases filed after Ramu attack were on bail.

Another writ petitioner Eunus Ali Akond said, "I will not pray to any bench for hearing the petition, as I know very well that the judges will not accept this petition due to the burden of cases. Over 1,000 judges need to be appointed to the High Court for quick hearing and disposal of cases."

One of the probe reports submitted to the HC on May 16, 2013 blamed the failure of the local administration, intelligence and law enforcement agencies for their inaction.

The enquiry by a judicial body identified 298 people responsible for the attacks, HC sources said.

Another probe led by police blamed the then superintendent of police in Cox's Bazar and officer-in-charge of Ramu Police Station for the failure. The committee recommended action against the then OC AK Nazibul Islam, but did not suggest any action against the then SP Selim Md Jahangir.

The other inquiry report of the home ministry mentioned that 205 people were involved behind the mayhem, planned at least 10 days ahead.

Law minister

FROM PAGE 16
minister as saying.
But he did not make such comments, Anisul said in the rejoinder.

Anisul, after a meeting of a sub-committee on Road Transport Act-2018 on September 25, rather said, "This is not true that the law cannot be implemented due to opposition of transport owners and workers."

The minister added that Transparency International Bangladesh had not even mentioned his name in its press statement. The minister asked The Daily Star to express regret for publishing the "false report", or else he would take legal action.

OUR REPLY
The Daily Star ran the report of news agency UNB as it was. Different newspapers also ran the same copy of UNB. The Daily Star did not change the agency copy.



People attend a rally to demand the release of jailed protesters, who were detained during opposition demonstrations for fair elections, in Moscow, Russia yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Myanmar claims

FROM PAGE 16
Last year, the UN-established Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar recommended the prosecution of top Myanmar military commanders on charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Myanmar has rejected the allegations.

Four years after a civilian government in Myanmar officially replaced decades of military rule, Kyaw Tint Swe said that "transformation from authoritarianism to a democratic system is a daunting challenge." Nonetheless, he rejected notions that the conditions around Rohingya repatriation be set by anyone but Myanmar and Bangladesh. The two nations signed an agreement in late 2017 to address the issue but repeated attempts at repatriation have failed because the Rohingyas refuse to return without security guarantees.

"Issues between neighbours can and must be resolved bilaterally in an amicable and friendly manner," Kyaw Tint Swe said. "There have been persistent calls to put pressure on Myanmar. There is also a call to set up a 'Safe Zone' inside Myanmar. Such a demand is neither warranted nor workable."

He added, pointedly: "We do not respond well to coercion that is removed from the fairness and consideration due to a sovereign independent member of the family of nations."

Kyaw Tint Swe said any displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh would be issued identity cards upon return — either citizenship cards or, for those who don't qualify, green card-style "national verification cards." This is a sensitive issue because Myanmar asserts that many Rohingyas came from elsewhere and aren't citizens.

Kyaw Tint Swe also rejected notions that the International Criminal Court be involved in any probes into military abuse of Rohingyas in Rakhine. Myanmar is not a party to the court, and Kyaw Tint Swe said an investigation by the country's military recently produced an announcement that "suggests that there will soon be a court martial."

On Thursday, the UN's top human rights body agreed to set up a team to collect evidence of crimes against the Rohingyas and others that could be used to prosecute perpetrators. A day later, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met with Kyaw Tint Swe and renewed calls for Myanmar to bring to justice those responsible for abuses.

"Myanmar is not opposed to accountability for any wrongdoing related to the large outflow of displaced persons to Bangladesh," Kyaw Tint Swe said, but any international body

"does not have jurisdiction over alleged crimes in our country."

Also Friday at the UN, Bangladesh's leader warned that a wider regional problem would be at hand if the Rohingya situation isn't resolved. The crisis, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said, is "going beyond the camps" where most refugees are staying.

Hasina appealed to the international community to "understand the untenability of the situation" surrounding the refugees from Myanmar, who are fleeing persecution by the military there. She also said health and security are becoming problems as congestion and environmental problems increase. Bangladesh said this week that authorities will build barbed-wire fences around more than 30 Rohingya refugee camps near the border to stop their expansion.

A month gone, yet no gazette for taskforce

FROM PAGE 16
It is supposed to comprise the inspector general of police, secretaries to the relevant ministries, chiefs of different government bodies concerned and representatives from transport owners' and workers' organisations.

Transport expert Prof Shamsul Haque and Nirapad Sarak Chai Chairman Ilias Kanchan will also be its members, while secretary to the Road Transport and Highway Division will be its member secretary.

Amid growing concerns over road crashes, the Shahjahan Khan-led committee was formed in the 26th NRSC meeting in February and on April 28 it submitted its report to the prime minister with a 111-point recommendation.

NO HEADWAY?
The resolution of the September 5 meeting was signed on September 19, but no gazette in this regard has been issued so far, an official concerned said. Nazrul Islam, the member secretary of the taskforce, told this correspondent yesterday that they had already sent documents to the cabinet division to issue a gazette.

"We hope the gazette will be issued soon. The taskforce will then start work," he said.

Talking to this newspaper, Abul Maksud said, "This is an urgent issue. But I am surprised that there is no progress in this regard even after three weeks."

"If at least a single meeting was held, we could have set modalities of our work. But nothing happened," he lamented.

He cast doubt over the success of the taskforce as most of its members are ex-officio, who are already burdened with their own tasks. Besides, it would be difficult to hold meetings of the taskforce mainly because of the large number of members.

"There should have been a smaller team -- five to six members -- with dedicated manpower who will regularly monitor the implementation of the recommendations and submit reports to the taskforce," he suggested.

"It would have been better if the taskforce could be given a permanent structure."

Asked when the taskforce will start work, Obaidul Quader said, "We are taking preparations in this regard. There is no reason for further delay. It will start work as soon as possible."

Quader, also the general secretary of ruling Awami League, said he had already spoken to the home minister and asked him to convene a meeting to start the implementation.

ROAD TRANSPORT ACT-2018
While different newspapers have been reporting that the government is mulling amendment to the Road Transport Act-2018, Quader refuted it.

"These [reports of amendment] are just buzzwords. We did not take any initiative to do this [amendment]," he said.

The parliament passed the Act in September last year but the government did not issue any gazette making the law operative.

Meanwhile, different transport organisations have been demanding amendments to several sections of the law, including making all offences under the law "bailable".

In February, a three-member committee, led by the home minister, was formed to look into how the Act could be implemented. The committee held its latest meeting on Wednesday.

After the meeting, different media houses ran a report that said the government was going to amend

the law giving into the pressure of transport leaders.

Quader, however, said the committee would place their recommendations before the National Road Safety Council at its next meeting.

"I have seen today that TIB [Transparency International Bangladesh] has expressed concerns over it [probable amendment]. But we don't know where it [TIB] got the news from," he said.

Quader made the comments while speaking to journalists after visiting an under-construction underpass near Shaheed Ramiz Uddin School and College on Airport Road in the capital yesterday.

The 24th Engineer Construction Brigade of the Bangladesh Army is constructing the underpass. Two college students were killed in the area in a road crash last year, triggering a massive student protest for safe roads.

The Tk 57 crore project has seen 70 percent progress and is expected to be complete by December this year, Quader said.

Senior army officials were present at the under-construction site with Quader.

Withdraw the VC

FROM PAGE 1
Nasiruddin on his mobile phone.

Prof Dil Afroza Begum, a member of the committee and also UGC member, said the five-member body handed over its probe report to UGC Chairman Prof Kazi Shahidullah yesterday morning.

Talking to this newspaper in the afternoon, Shahidullah said, "I have received the report and forwarded it to the education ministry."

Both Afroza and Shahidullah refused to give details of the report. The UGC had asked the committee to probe the allegations of "tyrannical behaviour, irregularities, corruption and moral turpitude" against Nasiruddin.

On September 25, the five-member team, led by UGC member Muhammad Alamgir, went to the BSMRSTU campus and talked to teachers, students and others concerned. The team members stayed on the campus for two days.

Nasiruddin was appointed the VC in February 2015. The university now has 8,000 students, according to the UGC.

The students, who have been demonstrating on the university campus since September 18, alleged that the VC was involved in corruption in recruitment of some teachers and employees.

One such allegation was raised over the recruitment of Khondoker Mahmud Parvez, now chairman of the international relations department.

Parvez, also nephew of the VC, secured second class at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This means he didn't qualify to be a teacher at the university as per the job advertisement published by the BSMRSTU authorities.

He joined BSMRSTU as a section officer in 2016.

The following year, he joined as a lecturer of the IR department, and in July 2018 he was promoted to assistant professor and became the chairman of the department the same year, flouting the rules.

Contacted, Mahmud refuted the allegation, and said, "I was appointed through proper process."

He claimed that those who are against the VC are spreading such false

allegations. Besides, Akkas Ali, former chairman of computer science and engineering (CSE) department, was appointed a teacher in February 2016 allegedly in violation of the university rules.

Though the circular stated that the post of a lecturer required master's degree, Akkas was taken in, and he completed his master's from BSMRSTU after months of his joining.

"I did extremely well in the written examinations and viva voce. The recruitment committee and our VC sir were happy with me and gave me the appointment letter," Akkas told this newspaper recently.

PROTESTS
The agitating students continued their sit-in in front of the administrative building yesterday, demanding removal of the VC.

Tanvir Ahmed Shihab, a third-year student of the CSE department, said they would continue their protests until the VC is removed.

The students said Nasiruddin was involved in corruption in development projects including construction of Shaheed Minar and Bangabandhu's

mural on the campus.

They also brought allegations of sexual harassment against him, and claimed he had some students admitted to different departments in exchange for money.

They also said the university authorities suspended students and served show-cause notices to those teachers who spoke against them.

The students launched demonstrations on September 18, protesting the suspension of Faatema Tuz Zinia, a student of the law department and also university reporter of The Daily Sun, over a Facebook post.

In the wake of protest and huge criticism on social media, the university authorities withdrew the suspension order.

On September 21 morning, the authorities suddenly declared a 10-day vacation ahead of Durga Puja and asked the students to vacate dormitories by 10:00am. But the protests raged on.

The students alleged that goons, hired by the VC, attacked them the same day, leaving at least 20 injured.

Caught in the act

FROM PAGE 16
revealed the detailed timeline of a star 375 million light-years away warping and spiralling into the unrelenting gravitational pull of a supermassive black hole, researchers said on Thursday.

The star, roughly the same size as our sun, was eventually sucked into oblivion in a rare cosmic occurrence that astronomers call a tidal disruption event, they added.

Astronomers used an international network of telescopes to detect the phenomenon before turning to TESS, whose permanent viewing zones designed to hunt distant planets caught the beginning of the violent event, proving effective its unique method of surveilling the cosmos.

"This was really a combination of both being good and being lucky and sometimes that's what you need to push the science forward," said astronomer Thomas Holoien of the Carnegie Institution for Science, who led the research published in the Astrophysical Journal.

Such phenomena happen when a star ventures too close to a supermassive black hole, objects that reside at the centre of most large galaxies including our Milky Way. The black hole's tremendous gravitational forces tear the star to shreds, with some of its material tossed into space and the rest plunging into the black hole, forming a disk of hot, bright gas as it is swallowed.

7 years

FROM PAGE 16
Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Uttam's wife Rita Barua, who is now living in a rented house near Uttam's home in Ramu upazila town, said she and her 10-year-old son Aditya Barua were passing hard days due to financial hardship.

Rita used to work at a computer shop but she does not have the job now.

"I run my family with a little financial help from my father's side," said Rita.

When the mayhem began, Uttam fled home to save his life. He could not say anything about where he would go, said Rita, adding, "We looked for Uttam in every possible place, but we could not find him."

"My son Aditya was only three years old at that time. Now he is 10."

She said education expenses of Aditya, who is a fourth grader, became an extra burden on her. She did not know how far she could continue supporting his education.

Many victim families got assistance from different government and non-government organisations, but her family did not get anything, claimed Rita.

Talking to this correspondent, Uttam's mother Madhobi Barua, who has a 16-year-old mentally-challenged daughter, said they were going through financial hardship as her husband was unemployed. He worked at a shop in Chattogram city.

Abul Khayer, officer-in-charge of Ramu Police Station, said, "After the mayhem, a case was filed making Uttam the prime accused. Police have submitted a charge sheet before the court accusing him. But police could not find him."

Info flow

FROM PAGE 16
experiencing the trend of shrinking the flow of information in its system. In order to uphold human rights and to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 16.10, in the country, the free flow of information is essential," it said in a press release yesterday.

ARTICLE 19 issued the release on the occasion of the International Day for Universal Access to Information. This year, the Unesco marks the day with the theme "Access to Information: Leaving No One Behind".

Faruq Faisal, Bangladesh and South Asia regional director of ARTICLE 19, which defends and promotes freedom of expression and freedom of information, said, "There is no alternative to the free flow of information in achieving human rights and SDG goals."

"In Bangladesh, it appears that the lawmakers are prone to obstructing the flow of free information through enactment of controversial law [Digital Security Act-2018] and government officials by issuing notices; which is against international standards and commitment. We are concerned that if these issues are not addressed, Bangladesh might lag behind in achieving global development goals," he said.

It said Bangladesh is still struggling to ensure the free flow of information as per international norms and standards.

ARTICLE 19 calls on the government to uphold its constitution in recognising right to freedom of speech, opinion, and information by repealing all restrictions on the right to information.

The rights organisation said it believes that establishing the right to information is essential for a transparent and accountable government and administration, which will eventually accelerate the Vision-2021 of the government to make "Digital Bangladesh".