

ONION PRICE MANIPULATION

Authorities detect 18 culprits in Ctg

Importers, C&F agents, warehouse owners and commission agents among them

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

Chattogram district administration has identified 18 market players allegedly responsible for manipulating the prices of onions imported from Myanmar, as well as for selling those in black market.

The manipulators include importers, clearing and forwarding agents, warehouse owners and commission agents, officials said.

The soaring onion price following a ban on onion export by India in September, prompted many businesses to import the spice from Myanmar. But the prices kept soaring.

Officials sat in a series of meetings with the traders and conducted several mobile court drives in different markets in the city in last two months, but failed to control the price.

Warehouse owners and commission agents at Khatunganj, one of the biggest wholesale markets in the city, said they were held hostage by importers who actually fix the rates.

According to the administration, though the average import price of onion from Myanmar was Tk 42 per kg, the wholesale price of onion was between Tk 90 and Tk 110 per kg throughout the last month at Khatunganj.

To rein in the prices, the administration with support from the commerce ministry, conducted further mobile court drives in wholesale markets of Chattogram city in the last 4 days. The ministry sent its Deputy Secretary Selim Hossain to monitor the situation.

During the first two days of the drives, the mobile court interrogated Khatunganj based wholesalers and warehouse owners, and collected a list of 15 market players in Chattogram city and Teknaf upazila, responsible for onion price manipulation through different kinds of fraudulence.

As per the list, the same court raided the port city's Reazuddin Bazar for detaining three onion importers A

Hossain Brothers, JS Traders and Ms. Sourav Enterprise, on Tuesday.

The court found that the first two businesses were trading imported cosmetics in the market, while the last business was found closed on that day.

Executive Magistrate Towhidul Islam, who led the drive, told The Daily Star that at first the firm owners denied involvement in importing and trading onion, but later admitted after the officials found documents proving that they sold onion to a Khatunganj based warehouse, in the shops.

They confessed to importing onion from Myanmar, hoarding and selling those at Khatunganj in October, said Towhidul.

The firms each sold 63 tonnes and 103 tonnes of onion to a Shah Amanat Traders on November 2, he said, adding that none of them could show any documents related to the import of the goods.

The firm owners admitted that they had imported the products through black market, and a Teknaf based C&F agents fixed the rate, he said.

The court awarded each of them with 15 days in prison under the Essential Commodity Act 1956 for not having proper documents.

The awardee gave the rest three names of Teknaf based businesses involved in the market manipulation.

Yesterday the administration fixed the wholesale price of Myanmar's onion at Tk 85 per kg. The officials declared to continue drives to monitor the markets.

The traders at Khatunganj, however, said it would be difficult for them to sell onion at this price since onion were already being sold for Tk 85 per kg in Myanmar for the last four weeks.

Meanwhile, Idris Alam, general secretary of Hamidullah Mia Market Traders Association in Khatunganj, said the price of Myanmar's onion would drop significantly in a few days if the market manipulation can be checked.

Crisis at JU deepening

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"We will stay on the campus and its adjacent areas at night and continue our demo tomorrow morning," he told The Daily Star yesterday afternoon.

Prof Rayhan Rhyme of philosophy department, a spokesperson for "Jahangirnagar Against Corruption", the platform that steered the agitation, said, "We will continue our protests until the VC resigns."

He said they would hold a rally and render songs reiterating their demand at another protest programme in front of the VC's residence today.

Meanwhile, Deputy Education Minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury yesterday asked all the groups linked to the crisis to have patience and not to take law in their own hands.

"We will launch an investigation if we get any specific allegations against the Jahangirnagar University administration. We will take actions if the allegations are found to be true," he told reporters at a press conference at the International Mother Language Institute in the capital.

"If we find that the allegations are wrong, we will take action against the complainants," he said.

On the BCL assault, he said they would take measures against Chhatra League leaders if their involvement in attacking students and teachers was found.

Mohibul then called on all to remain alert so that no "third party" could take advantage of the situation.

Earlier in the day around 10:00am, the protesters started gathering at Murad Chattar on the JU campus.

Around half-an-hour later, more than a hundred students brought out a procession, demanding the VC's resignation. They chanted slogans, criticising the university decision to close the halls after the BCL assault.

Later, they held a solidarity rally in front of the old administrative building where over 300 students and teachers of different departments along with some student leaders expressed solidarity with the protesters.

France claims death of top jihadist leader in Mali

AFP, Bamako

France on Tuesday announced the death of a top jihadist leader in Mali as it sought to reassure the West African nation of European support in the fight against militant bloodshed.

French troops killed Moroccan Ali Maychou of the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM) in Mali last month, Defence Minister Florence Parly told AFP aboard a government

plane as she returned from an official visit to the region.

He was "the second most-wanted terrorist in the Sahel, including by the Americans", after GSIM's number one Iyad Ag Ghalay, she said.

Comprising several jihadist groups linked to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the GSIM has claimed responsibility for the biggest attacks in the Sahel since its official launch in 2017.



Prime Minister and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina releases a white pigeon while inaugurating the national council of Krishak League at the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday.

PHOTO: BSS

Industries, but not bypassing agriculture

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council meeting at the Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh.

Sameer and Kulsum were joint general secretaries of the outgoing committee.

Before the announcement, the PM had underscored the need for preserving arable land for the sake of ensuring food security, BSS reports.

"We are going to stop building industries here and there as we have to save arable land for the sake of ensuring food security for the 16 crore people. The demand for food never ends, rather [it] increases with rising population," she said.

The PM simultaneously urged the educated people to engage themselves in agriculture as it was vital for the country and asked the Krishak League leaders and workers to do something to this end.

"Bangladesh is a country largely dependent on agriculture and the farmers are helping us to live by producing crops. So, never belittle the work of farmers..."

Spelling out her government's initiatives for the development of agriculture, she said, "We are doing everything for the development of agriculture and for farmers specially in the haor, char and hilly areas."

Recalling the World Bank's opposition to giving subsidies to the agriculture sector, Hasina said at the time she had questioned whether they could stop giving such price supports in the US and European countries.

In this context, Hasina said, "Eighteen farmers were killed by then BNP government as they demanded fertilizer for cultivating land. After assuming power, we lowered fertilizer price by four times to make it affordable for the farmers."

"We have adopted the National Agricultural Policy-2018 and have been working in accordance with the policy for the development of agriculture," she said.

Quader, also the road transport



Sameer Chandra Umme Kulsum

and bridges minister, spoke on the occasion as the special guest.

Among others, outgoing Bangladesh Krishak League president Motahar Hossain Mollah, general secretary Shamsul Haque Reza and vice president Sharif Ashraf Hossain, also addressed the event.

Hasina inaugurated the council by releasing pigeons and balloons. A minute's silence was observed to show respect to the memories of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, four national leaders and martyrs of different movements, including the independence movement in 1971.

Third terminal now to cost 40pc more

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"We hadn't made a single decision without Jica approval. It is all transparent," he said.

Around 130 domestic and international flights carrying 25,000-30,000 passengers use the HSI every day. There are 26 foreign airlines operating there, officials said.

Around 70 lakh passengers and 1.6 crore luggage are handled by the airport every year. But there are only eight luggage conveyor belts in the two international terminals.

Sales of Biman Bangladesh Airlines ticket alone increased to 110 percent in the last five years for domestic and international routes.

According to the specification, the third terminal will be on a space of 22,600 square metres. The new cargo terminal will be on 41,200 square metres, north and south

rapid exit taxiway on 22,000 and 29,500 square metres, apron on 498,500 square metres, connecting taxiway on 66,500 square metres, and a multi-storey car parking on 62,000 square metres.

A water supply system, sewerage treatment plant, intake power plant distribution system, equipment of cargo complex, airfield ground lighting system and hydrant fuel system are also included in the project, sources at the civil aviation ministry said.

EQUIPMENT FOR ROOPPUR

The cabinet committee on purchase yesterday also approved another purchase proposal for physical security protection system for Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

The finance minister said the project was approved on Tuesday's Ecnc meeting.

Anwar Hossain, secretary of the

science and technology ministry, said the cabinet committee on purchase approved the proposal for purchasing different equipment by the Russian contractors.

DELAYED MEGA PROJECTS

Planning ministry officials said in almost every Ecnc meeting, four or five projects are placed with an aim to increase the cost and time.

The Padma Rail Link project was taken in 2016 at a cost of Tk 34,000 crore. It has now increased to Tk 39,246 crore. As of August, only 17.15 percent of the project has been implemented.

Sources at the railway ministry said the cost of the project might increase further.

The much-anticipated Padma Bridge project was taken in 2010 at a cost of Tk 10,000 crore. The cost of the project has now crossed Tk 30,000 crore.

Series win in Tigers' sights

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in the first T20I at smoggy Delhi.

Tourists have been told to evacuate Porbandar -- roughly 200 kilometres from the stadium -- where the cyclone is likely to cross. There was good news too as the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) tweeted yesterday afternoon that Maha is set to weaken and skirt the Saurashtra coast, which includes Rajkot, as a deep depression around noon today. The storm actually hit Rajkot in the evening yesterday, and the earlier than forecast impact could mean that the rains will cease earlier today, improving the possibility of the match starting at the scheduled start time of 7:30pm (Bangladesh time). Even if there is a delay, Saurashtra Cricket Association Secretary Himanshu Shah said that the good drainage at the ground would allow the match to be started around an hour after the rain stops.

Despite the gloom there were not many dark clouds hovering in captain Mahmudullah Riyad's mind,

who insisted that his team will stick to the same philosophy.

"From the beginning there wasn't any pressure on us. As we mentioned, we had nothing to lose when we first came here. I think it's more about gaining and tomorrow is another opportunity to gain another victory for Bangladesh. We will play positive and energetic cricket," Mahmudullah said yesterday when asked if his team were feeling any kind of pressure.

Bangladesh have had some disappointing close defeats to India in the past and went into this series without ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan -- banned by the ICC for two years (one of those suspended) after failing to report corrupt approaches -- and star opener Tamim Iqbal. Seniors such as Mahmudullah and Mushfiqur Rahim have managed to spur the side to do the unexpected to overcome the upheaval of the past weeks.

"If you consider whatever is going on in recent times in Bangladesh

cricket, I think a series win will be a big boost. Tomorrow we have to play good cricket against India as they are a very good side on their home soil and all across the world. We have to be at our best from the very first ball," Riyad reiterated.

Bangladesh will likely field the same lineup they played in Delhi unless there are some changes in the weather or the pitch on offer, which looked like a solid batting track. Meanwhile India skipper Rohit Sharma talked of not repeating the mistakes of the first game.

"It is important to focus on the mistakes we made and make sure those are not repeated. That is the sign of a good team, when you don't repeat mistakes," the India stand-in skipper said yesterday.

With India needing a win to keep the series alive and the Tigers needing a victory to clinch what will be a historic achievement, the Rajkot T20I, in the eye of the cyclone, could be a feisty encounter between the Asian rivals.

Protesters

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the Awami League", apart from her, could complete their tenures in JU. "What we see in the cases of Awami League VCs is pathetic. Prof Alauddin could bring independence to the country, but he could not do anything at JU," she said.

Again, Sharif Enamul Kabir, who is an influential man, too could not stay at the post, she continued.

"Fortunately, or unfortunately, I have completed my four years [tenure]. I tried to leave, but the government thought that it would be wise to keep me here as I did not give any trouble to anyone," Prof Farzana said.

"And that brought me trouble." Defending Chhatra League once again, the JU VC said, "Chhatra League men did not attack anyone on their own. After Shibir's involvement in the protest surfaced in the media, they [BCL activists] reacted."

"Such reaction should also have come from the other progressive student bodies like Chhatra Front, Chhatra Union or Chhatra Dal. But they didn't give any such reaction, although Shibir has been banned on the university campus since 1992."

"I am not supporting Chhatra League's incitement. But those who are doing politics in the name of progress should at least once chant slogans demanding a campus free of Shibir," she added.

She also questioned the motive of protesters who are still on campus despite the declaring they had vacated their halls.

"Vacating the halls means they have to leave the campus. Now they are doing it illegally. It will force us to take legal action," the JU VC added.

She also termed being confined to her residence "mental torture".

"If I let Chhatra Front to stage [demonstrations] in front of my residence and sing all night, later they would hold a concert there. Don't we have the right to sleep?" she asked.

"You [journalists] don't see any mental torture. You only see the attack and report on that," she added.

Prof Farzana, however, hoped they would be able to reopen the university very soon.

Prothom Alo

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Hearing the complaint, the court directed the authorities concerned to exhume Abar's body and conduct an autopsy on it.

It also ordered the officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station to submit an investigation report on the case on December 1, after merging it with the report of the unnatural death case filed earlier in this connection.

In the complaint, Mojibur said his son was electrocuted and fell unconscious at 3:30pm on Friday while attending the programme of Kishor Alo.

The 14-year-old boy was taken to Universal Medical College and Hospital in Mohakhali 45 minutes after the incident happened, whereas Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital was on the opposite side of the event venue, Mojibur complained, adding that his son was declared dead at 4:51pm.

Abar might have been alive if the authorities had immediately taken him to the nearby hospital, he mentioned.

Mojibur was informed about his son's death by one of Abar's classmates around 7:30pm that day.