

## Onion price

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sell for Tk 250 next week.

Onion prices were hiked two months ago after India put export restrictions.

"I have never seen onion prices this high," said 54-year-old Kamrul Hasan, while shopping in the capital's Karwan Bazar.

"This is shocking," said the employee of a private company.

The picture was similar in Moghbazar Kitchen market.

The industries minister on Tuesday told parliament that the onion market "has come under control now".

Around 2:00pm wholesale and retail prices of onion were Tk 160 and 170 in Karwan Bazar. By 4:30pm the prices soared to Tk 170 and 180.

However, the Egyptian variety was selling for Tk 135-150.

"How could it become costlier so far within a few hours?" Habibur Rahman, a retailer asked a wholesaler in Karwan Bazar in the afternoon.

In reply, the wholesaler Mohamad Sayeed said, "We have a supply shortage."

Our correspondents in different districts reported a sharp rise throughout yesterday.

In Rajshahi's retail market, a kg was sold for Tk 165-170, in Sylhet Tk 145-160, in Khulna Tk 160, in Rangamati Tk 140-160, in Narayanganj Tk 155, in Chattogram Tk 150-155, and in Cumilla Tk 150.

### OTHER ESSENTIALS' PRICE ALSO SOARED

Vegetables, garlic, ginger and soybean oil have also become pricier by Tk 5 to 30 per kg in a week.

A kg of cauliflower was selling at Tk 50 to 60, up from Tk 25 to 35 four days ago. Besides, prices of other winter vegetables, including cabbage, carrot and radish, also went up by Tk 10 to 20.

Prices of bottled soybean oil rose by about Tk 5 a litre.

"Vegetables' prices are supposed to go down as the winter is coming. The sellers are using the recent downpour as an excuse," Sharmin Zaman, who was shopping in Karwan Bazar, said.

## Turna Nishita

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In a bid to investigate the incident, four committees have been formed at different levels, he also said.

Of the injured, Nurul said 10 were being treated at Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital, nine in Dhaka Orthopaedic Hospital, three in Dhaka Medical College Hospital, three in Kasba Hospital, seven in Dhaka Combined Military Hospital and four in Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital.

The minister also said that each injured person was given Tk 10,000 in compensation, while the Bangladesh Railway (BR) has taken steps to hand over Tk 1 lakh to the families of each deceased.

Nurul also gave assurances that the railways ministry and the BR would remain alert to avert recurrence of such accidents in the future.

### NO SIGNAL VIOLATION

A four-member probe committee -- formed by the railways ministry -- yesterday said they did not find any record of signal violation in the Mandabagh railway stationmaster's register, reports our Brahmanbaria correspondent.

The committee did not find evidence of such violations in the Signal Failure Register -- which is where such violations are manually entered.

The register was stored in the Mandabagh railway stationmaster's room and the probe committee took a picture of the relevant pages.

The only incident registered was one on November 5, which was when a local train had violated a signal.

Najmul Hassan, the assistant stationmaster, said, "I do not know about this as I was not present that day. The stationmaster can confirm."

Stationmaster Zakir Hossain Chowdhury could not be reached for comments.

A member of the committee said there was a digitalised centralised system which could be used to find if any violations had taken place.

The committee's convener Additional Secretary of the railway ministry Rafiqul Islam said, "We have collected necessary information and will submit our probe report after five days."

The probe committee is comprised of Joint Director General of BR Rashida Sultan, Deputy Secretary of the railway ministry Mir Alamgir Hossain and Chief Signal and Telecommunication Engineer of BR Abdul Kalam.

Meanwhile, Mandabagh Railway Station Master Zaker Hossain Chowdhury filed an unnatural death case with Akhaura Railway Police Station on Tuesday night in connection with the accident. Officer-in-Charge of the station Shyamol Kanti Das confirmed the filing of the case.

Another committee formed by the Brahmanbaria district administration has already started their investigation, reports our district correspondent.

## High transport cost

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for horticulture products.

"Bangladesh's congested transportation and often unsophisticated logistics systems impose high costs to the economy," said Mercy Tembon, World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh and Bhutan.

By making its logistics more efficient, Bangladesh can significantly optimise its connectivity, business environment and competitiveness, and put the country on the right path to become a dynamic upper middle-income country, she added.

Bangladesh ranked 105th among 141 countries in WEF Global Competitiveness Index 2019 and 100th among 161 countries in the World Bank Logistics Performance Index 2018.

Efficient logistics has become one of the main drivers for global trade competitiveness and export growth and diversification, the report said.

For Bangladesh, improving its logistics performance provides an opportunity to increase its world market share in garment and textile, which accounts for 84 percent of its total exports.

It would allow the country to expand into new markets and diversify its manufacturing and agriculture products.

### COSTLY TRANSPORT

Road transport rates in Bangladesh are high, the report said.

The most commonly used truck

in Bangladesh is the seven-tonne truck.

The average cost of carrying a tonne a kilometre here is \$0.095, which is higher than many developing and developed countries, including the US, France, Australia, India, and Pakistan.

The report on high cost of transport blamed inefficiencies in the system, low truck utilisation (35 percent empty trips), extreme levels of congestion on roads and ports, and limited competition among transport modes.

It mentioned average dwell times at Chattogram Port to be four days for an export container and 11 days for an import container.

Cutting down dwell times would save logistic costs significantly, the report said.

The social cost of annual carbon dioxide emission from road freight transport in Bangladesh is equivalent to 1.2 percent of the GDP, with almost 60 percent of the emission caused by congestion, it said.

Transport expert Shamsul Haque said the high dependency on road transport (about 84 percent) should be cut to change the situation.

Although multi-modal transport system was in the government's plan, it has not been implemented yet.

The government should put emphasis on railway and riverine transport to change the situation, he added.

The WB report said improving

logistics requires a system-wide approach. It needs greater coordination among public institutions and private sectors involved in logistics.

It said the one-sided logistics service markets, heavily dependent on roads, need to be addressed to reduce costs and improve quality.

At a regional level, harmonising logistics systems and aligning Bangladesh's customs with that of its neighbours could turn Bangladesh into an important node for regional freight flows and further boost its trade, it said.

"There is no doubt that reforms and investments for better transport and logistics will yield Bangladesh substantial economic benefits and strengthen its competitive advantage," said Matias Herrera Dappe, senior economist at the WB and author of the report.

But the solution to logistics is not just to invest more but to invest better, by focusing on the service gap, and creating the incentives for high quality and competitive logistics services, Dappe added.

Mashirul Rahman, economic affairs adviser to the prime minister, said the government has emphasised on infrastructure development, which is now visible, but their effective management is also important.

More practical and optimum solutions to the problems highlighted by the report need to be found.

"The government has to move fast to become a developed country."

## Uphill task for Tigers

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India steamrolled South Africa just recently at home and with their pace attack breathing fire, having troubled the likes of Australia and South Africa away, the task for Bangladesh's newest captain was immensely difficult. Mominul talked of taking everything in his stride.

"I don't think of the past or the future. I prefer to stay in the present. Since we will play two Tests here, we have a good opportunity and we are preparing very well," the skipper said. "There is no pressure on us. There is no pressure on us to win the match. We will try to play good cricket."

Coming off the back of a defeat in a Test to Afghanistan at home, the Tigers might be feeling apprehensive about facing India, especially with the absences of key players Shakib Al Hasan -- banned for two years from all cricket with one of that suspended for failing to report corrupt approaches -- and Tamim Iqbal.

"It's like not having three players when you don't have those two," Mominul said about Shakib and Tamim. "Shakib bhai is like two players in one and Tamim bhai is not here either. It's going to be a challenge but we can't focus on that now. We have to play with those who are here," he reiterated.

India skipper Virat Kohli said they were not going to take the field expecting a win.

"No guarantee we'll win. We'll

have to play well for it. We won't win if we just turn up. It won't be easy. We've always played good cricket in Indore, but wherever you play you need to work hard and respect the game. Believe in yourself. We have good memories in this team," Kohli, who was rested for the preceding T20 series, said yesterday.

However, he was very confident in his fast bowling line-up. The pitch is going to be lively with a bit of bounce in the wicket for the bowlers early on and pacers might dictate how the first two days pan out.

"If you ask me, we're right at the top [as the best fast bowling attack]. I won't even count ourselves in the [top] three. Batting was never an issue; spin was never an issue. After Zak [Zahir Khan] and all the stalwarts went away, we were thinking how we can get back to the top, have the ability and the firepower to pick 20 wickets. Just seeing the way they've bowled, it's the belief that stands out - any kind of the pitch, any kind of opposition, they believe that they can get more out of the pitch than the opposition.

Bangladesh will have to face the early music of that pace attack but there is a lot more than meets the eye in this young visiting squad and they will be desperately hoping to weather the early storm as the pitch is expected to get better for batsmen as the Test progresses.

## Anti-graft drive

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Answering to a query from opposition lawmaker Rustum Ali Faraji, Hasina said the government has adopted zero tolerance policy against all criminal activities, including corruption, terrorism, drugs and gambling.

She said the drive against corruption, drug, terrorism, and gambling would continue in all sectors and places, including districts, upazilas and municipalities.

### ROHINGYA CRISIS

Responding to a supplementary question from Shahiduzzaman Sarker MP of Awami League, the PM said building trust among Rohingyas refugees for their repatriation depends on Myanmar.

She said the government has already discussed the Rohingya issue with India and China to find a permanent solution to the crisis. "We hope they will play an active role in this regard."

Hasina said Bangladesh has also discussed the issue with Myanmar's other neighbours, including Thailand and Laos.

"We've received a good response from everyone. They all realised that the crisis should be resolved. They [India, China, Laos and Thailand] want to see the return of Rohingyas and keep their relations with Myanmar intact."

The PM said Myanmar once showed interest in taking back Rohingyas and a list of Rohingyas was also prepared in this regard.

"But suddenly a movement was waged by the Rohingyas as they didn't want to return to Myanmar without their safety and security being ensured there."

She said it would be possible to resolve the crisis if Myanmar could build trust among Rohingyas.

In response to a query from Syed Nazibul Bashar Maizvandary MP, Hasina said her government would not allow anyone to use Bangladesh

land for carrying out insurgent or terrorist activities in any neighbouring country.

Nazibul Bashar, chairman of Tarikat Federation, a component of the ruling Awami League-led 14-party alliance, alleged that late president Ziaur Rahman and his wife Khaleda Zia had previously provided arms to Rohingya insurgents and now the BNP-Jamaat were trying to create anarchy using the Rohingyas as they realised that they won't be able to unseat the government through democratic movements or elections.

The BNP-Jamaat has also appointed lobbyists in this connection. What measures have been taken by the government in this regard?" he enquired the leader of the House.

The premier said, "There is no doubt that Ziaur Rahman had a hand in creating the Rohingya crisis. The politics of killing and coup had started in Bangladesh following the killing of the Father of the Nation in 1975. The Chittagong Hill Tracts crisis began from 1976-77, while the Rohingya crisis from 1978."

Hasina said her government always believe in peaceful solution to the Rohingya crisis and it has already taken initiatives in this regard.

### 'NO PLAN TO EXPORT GAS'

Answering to a question from Opposition Chief Whip Mashirul Rahman Ranga, the premier said her government had no plan to export natural gas to India's northeastern states.

She said the government has taken various measures to ensure energy security considering it as the highest priority.

Hasina said during her recent visit to India, she and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi jointly inaugurated the activities of exporting bulk LPG to Tripura from Bangladesh.

## 22 killed in 2 days

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masterminding and planning attacks against Israel.

In response to the killing of Atta and his wife, Islamic Jihad fired about 200 rockets into Israel on Tuesday, resuming yesterday morning.

Despite attempts by diplomats to restore calm, an Islamic Jihad official told Reuters that his group told mediators it intended to carry on its retaliatory attacks.

"Attempts to restore calm did not succeed, the Islamic Jihad see that it is time to respond to the assassination policy, which was revived by the Zionist enemy," the official said, asking not to be identified.

"The enemy will pay the price of its foolishness and we are determined to confront this aggression with all our might."

However, there was no sign that Hamas, the much larger Islamist group that controls Gaza, was inclined to be drawn into the fray. Hamas and Israel have managed to defuse previous escalations and avoid a full-scale conflict for the past five years, after fighting three wars from 2008-2014.

### SIRENS AND EXPLOSIONS

The rockets from Gaza sent Israelis rushing to shelters in towns near the Gaza border and deeper in the country, with air raid sirens going off as far north as Tel Aviv and missiles striking Israeli highways and towns. There were no reports of deaths in Israel.

The Israeli military assembled armoured vehicles along the border with Gaza, though a ground incursion into the territory seemed unlikely at this stage.

## Dhaka Int'l

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inauguration ceremony.

Among the artists, Shah Alam Sarkar, Fakir Shahabuddin, Chandana Majumdar, Kajol Dewan, Malek Kawal, Kamruzzaman Rabbi, Shafikul Islam and Bhabna Nitya Dol from Bangladesh would perform.

Daler Mehndi from India, Junoon and Hina Nasrullah from Pakistan, Sattama from Russia, Chveneburebi from Georgia, Habib Koité & Bamada from Mali would also share the same platform to celebrate the spirit of folk music at the festival.

Sun Foundation has initiated the festival which would be telecasted live on Maasranga Television.

## Missing WW2 sub found

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5 about 1,427 feet underwater off Okinawa, Japan.

Last year, researcher Yutaka Iwasaki found that the Navy had originally made an error in translating the Japanese war records that detailed where the Grayback had likely sunk. All this time, the Navy's historical records had listed an incorrect longitude for the submarine's location.

Armed with that information, as well as newly discovered and translated Japanese mission logs, Taylor told CNN that his team set out on an expedition to search for the Grayback, this time searching in the area southwest of Okinawa.

With the help of autonomous underwater vehicles, remotely operated vehicles and advanced