

Onions to be imported if prices don't fall

Says commerce minister

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi said the government will take steps to import onions if the prices of the essential cooking ingredient do not fall within a day or two.

A kilogram of onion now costs Tk 80, whereas it cost Tk 40-50 only a year ago, said local traders.

He noted there was no reason for the prices of onions to skyrocket during peak season.

The minister made the remarks while talking to journalists at Shalban in Rangpur yesterday, after reaching there for a two-day visit.

He also said that even though the government has set the retail prices of sugar, these prices are not yet being reflected in all markets.

So, the minister urged the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection to ensure that markets across the country strictly adhered to the government-set prices of sugar.

Regarding the control of the kitchen market, Tipu Munshi said it was not solely the commerce ministry's responsibility. "There are different ministries to take care of that. The prices of vegetables are fluctuating all around the country. But, the situation is not so bad."

However, the minister said there are some issues regarding the prices of onion and sugar. "The situation will come under control soon."

"Some dishonest traders are exploiting the global recession situation. The government, however, is taking a tough stance in order to maintain market stability," he added.

"The prices of imported commodities have risen, but we are still doing well in consideration of the global situation," he added.

AMINI PROTESTS

Iran executes three men

AFP, Tehran

Iranian authorities yesterday executed three men convicted of violence against the Islamic republic's security forces during protests triggered by Mahsa Amini's death in custody last year, the judiciary said.

Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi were convicted of "moharebeh", or "war against God", for drawing a gun during a demonstration in the central city of Isfahan, leading to the deaths of three members of the security forces, the judiciary's Mizan Online news website said.

Iran witnessed waves of protests following the September 16 death of 22-year-old Amini, an Iranian Kurd who had been arrested for an alleged breach of strict dress rules for women.



A man crating up Himsagar mangoes for sending the juicy summer fruit to the capital after harvesting. The photo was taken at a mango orchard in Phultola village of Satkhira Sadar upazila recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

ADANI PROBE

India regulator 'draws a blank' in foreign links

REUTERS, Mumbai

India's markets watchdog has 'drawn a blank' in investigations into suspected violations in overseas investments in the Adani group and pursuing the case could be a "journey without a destination", a court-appointed panel said.

Shares of companies of the coal-airports conglomerate, controlled by billionaire Gautam Adani, were up between 1.2 percent to 7 percent in late trade yesterday in a largely flat wider market.

The group's listed companies lost more than \$100 billion in market value earlier this year after US-based Hindenburg Research raised several governance concerns. The group has denied wrongdoing.

Following this, the Supreme Court asked the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to probe some of the allegations made and submit its findings to a six-member panel formed in March, which included a retired judge and veteran bankers.

"The foundation of SEBI's suspicion that led to investigations into the overseas entities' ownership is that they have 'opaque' structures," said the panel in a report dated May 6 and seen by Reuters yesterday.

"The ultimate chain of ownership above the 13 overseas entities is not clear."

But despite involving various Indian

and overseas agencies in the investigation across multiple countries, "SEBI has drawn a blank", the report said, adding that trying to prove who had invested in foreign portfolio investors who then pumped money into Adani could be an arduous task.

"It is evident that such an exercise could be a voluminous one but potentially a journey without a destination," the panel said. "... it would be a humongous task to figure out who the ultimate beneficial owner is."

Adani and the SEBI did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The court on Wednesday granted SEBI additional time until August 14 to complete its investigation into possible violation of securities law and regulatory disclosures by the Adani group. The court initially wanted it done by May 2.

SEBI is investigating alleged breach of related-party transaction rules, public shareholding norms and share price manipulation.

Related party transaction rules lay down practices to be followed when a listed company is involved in a transaction with another party, while public shareholding norms set out the minimum shareholding of a listed company required to be held by the public.

Modi seeks to boost New Delhi's Indo-Pacific role

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi heads to Papua New Guinea and Australia tomorrow as New Delhi seeks to counter mounting Chinese influence in both the Indian and Pacific oceans.

Western nations regularly refer to the wider region as the Indo-Pacific, but New Delhi has been left far behind by Beijing's efforts in recent years to woo the small island states that dot the vast expanses of water with trade and aid.

Several Pacific island states have switched their diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in recent decades, and before the coronavirus pandemic enjoyed economic boosts from Chinese tourists.

At the same time, as part of its Belt and Road Initiative, Beijing has negotiated infrastructure deals with countries around the Indian Ocean including Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Bangladesh, and Djibouti, sometimes accompanied by military agreements.

New Delhi sees the area as its backyard, and Beijing's activities have alarmed Indian officials.

32 BNP men sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

A Netrakona court yesterday sent 32 BNP men to jail for their alleged involvement in police assault and anti-state activities.

Police conducted multiple drives and arrested them on Thursday night and early yesterday, said Lutfur Rahman, additional superintendent of the district police.

Prof Md Anwarul Haque Bhuiyan, convener of Netrakona district unit BNP, alleged that police arrested the leaders and activists to foil the party's upcoming agitation programme in the district on Saturday.

The arrests were made to harass leaders and activists of the BNP and its front wing organisations, he added.

He also demanded immediate release of the arrested partymen.

Police, however, refused his allegations.

7 lakh shrimp fry seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

A joint force of Bangladesh Coast Guard and Department of Fisheries seized 7 lakh pieces of shrimp fry near Bablatala Bazar in Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila on Thursday.

Ashikur Rahman, fisheries officer in the upazila, said they conducted a raid on two trawlers, a canal and a shop and seized the fry.

A gang has been poaching various endangered species of fish, including shrimp fry, for long, he added.

Those who brought the shrimp fry managed to flee the scene. They will be brought to book, he further said.

The seized shrimp fry were released in the Andharmanik river near Nizampur Coast Guard Station.

Fisherman killed by lightning strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

A fisherman was killed and another injured by lightning strike in Netrakona's Mohanganj upazila yesterday morning.

The dead is Sumon Barman, 30, of Barantor village in Mohanganj.

Sumon and his neighbour Rubel Barman, 28, sustained injuries while they had been catching fishes in a local waterbody around 9:00am, said Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Mohanganj Police Station.

They were rushed to Mohanganj Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared Sumon dead.

On information, police recovered the body and handed it over to family members.

An unnatural death case was lodged with the police station in this connection.

Trial courts must hold sentencing hearings: HC

FROM PAGE 1

"Taking away the life of an individual is a highly serious act and the courts of law are always reluctant to pass any such order, unless it is bound to do so by the Act of the Legislature."

Some countries have already abolished death sentences as the parties to a criminal proceeding are human beings. Humans are bound to make mistakes, and mistakes should not take away the life of an individual, it says.

"Indian Supreme Court in Bachan Singh vs. State of Punjab (1980) 2 SCC-684, which is widely known as Bachan Singh case, has already given

some strict guidelines to be followed and has categorically declared that death sentence may only be given in 'rarest of rare cases'.

"Different benches of the Indian Supreme Court have also expressed their view to hold separate sentencing hearings on the ground that it would be fairer to the parties concerned, in particular the accused, and such hearing is necessary for balancing between aggravating and mitigating circumstances."

On February 28 this year, the HC bench pronounced the judgement in a case filed under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act

for the rape and murder of a third grader in Jashore in 2014.

The HC commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment for one convict and the other convict was already dead.

The full verdict released on Thursday mentions that the authorities concerned should immediately move the convict from death row to a general prison cell.

Law Minister Anisul Huq earlier said the government would formulate a uniform guideline to determine the types of sentences in criminal cases.

He said people are struggling to survive as prices of all the daily necessities, including rice, oil, egg, salt, sugar, onion, garlic, and ginger, have increased two to threefold.

The BNP leader said Hasina and her party leaders cannot sense the pulse of people as they have gotten isolated.

He alleged that the government is now using "false and ghost" cases against the opposition leaders and activists as a last resort to clinging to power at the flag end of its rule.

Fakhrul slammed the ruling party leaders for their comments that the caretaker government system has already gone to its grave.

"We want to make it clear that the people of this country will not accept any election without a caretaker government."

He asked the law enforcers not to play a biased role as the current government has lost support both at home and abroad.

The demonstrations will also be held today and on May 26 and 27.

Wasa 'personal property' of Taqsem

FROM PAGE 1

According to the Wasa law, the board should convene at least once in every two months. But the board didn't hold any meeting since March 15 due to the unwillingness of Taqsem, the chairman added.

Mostofa accused Taqsem of presenting budgets before the board unilaterally without having opinions from the board members beforehand. Whenever the board raised concerns or questions over different issues, Taqsem would dismiss those concerns and ask them to focus on the bigger pictures of the issues.

He said Taqsem made decisions on major purchases involving hundreds of crores of taka without the board's approval.

The chairman said they tried to set a limit for the MD's spending but faced resistance from him.

Taqsem also prevented the board of the Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority from holding meetings whenever he was on leave or didn't have any agenda, Mostofa added.

He said the Wasa board should be the apex governing body of the organisation and the MD should place his agendas before the board to ensure transparency and accountability.

The chairman alleged that Taqsem's activities undermined the board's authority and obstructed its members from carrying out their responsibilities.

He said the MD violated the government regulations by approving all budgets himself.

"A board meeting cannot be held without the assistance of some officials concerned. However, those officials are loyal to Taqsem A Khan. The acting board secretary was also appointed by the MD.

The government made such appointments previously."

The Wasa law stipulates that its secretary should have at least seven years' experience as a deputy secretary or as an official of that equivalent rank. However, Taqsem appointed an engineer as the acting secretary who didn't meet the appointment criteria, Mostofa said.

He said the Wasa board requested Taqsem to hire additional manpower for it, but he informed the board that new recruitment would be made once the organisation would have a new organogram.

In the letter sent to the ministry on Wednesday, Mostofa said that there is a lack of discipline in the Wasa.

The chairman said many Wasa staffers do not follow the office timing. A deputy managing director (human resources) tried to introduce a biometric attendance system, but Taqsem opposed the move, he added.

He said that the MD violated promotion rules and made unilateral decisions on many promotions and transfers.

Mostofa stressed the need for setting up a separate office for the Wasa board.

"We [board members] have come from different organisations. We are not doing full-time jobs. But Taqsem A Khan sent a letter to the LGRD ministry without mentioning the name of the sender, complaining that I go to the office regularly. He also claimed that I held meetings with some officials and CBA leaders and gave them directives. Enquired by the ministry, I wrote a letter to it."

Asked about complaints lodged with the ministry against him, the chairman said those who wrote against him did so under pressure.

"The leaders of the organisations, which sent letters to the ministry,

were not elected fairly. Elections to those platforms have not been conducted fairly since 2019. The presidents and secretaries of those organisations were selected by the MD himself," he said.

Mostofa said the MD divided the Wasa CBA into two factions and refused to allow the leaders of one of them to carry out their activities even though they had a court order in favour of their operations.

Asked about his expectations, Mostofa said they want the LGRD ministry to engage in discussions with the Wasa board and take necessary measures to address the problems in the organisation.

This correspondent could not reach Taqsem for comments as he did not respond to calls and texts yesterday.

Russia puts ICC prosecutor Khan on wanted list

AFP, Moscow

Russian authorities have put International Criminal Court prosecutor Karim Khan on a "wanted" list after the Hague-based court issued an arrest warrant for President Vladimir Putin in March.

Khan's picture could be seen in the Russian interior ministry's database yesterday.

The notice described him as a man born on March 30, 1970 in Edinburgh, Scotland but did not specify his offence.

In March, Russia opened a criminal probe into Khan after the ICC announced an arrest warrant for Putin on the war crime accusation of unlawfully deporting Ukrainian children.