



ONIONS STING

Prices soar, consumers hit hard

SUKANTA HALDER

Prices of onion increased by Tk 100 or more per kg overnight as traders began stockpiling following the news that India had extended a virtual restriction on its export.

On October 28, Indian authorities set a minimum export price of onions at \$800 per tonne for the rest of the year. The price made it almost impossible for Bangladeshi traders to import the essential cooking ingredient.

On Friday, New Delhi extended the curb until the end of March. Wholesale and grocery shop owners in Bangladesh blame India's move for the sudden hike in prices even though the restriction is nothing new.

As rising prices of essentials have already been making it harder for people to make ends meet, the nearly twofold hike shocked consumers.

At Kazir Dewri market in Chattogram, a kg of onions was sold for around Tk 240 yesterday, up from Tk 140 the previous day.

The consumers rights directorate raided different kitchen markets across the country and punished 133 businesses, but the initiative had little effect.

At Karwan Bazar, retailers were asking for Tk 220 a kg around 8:15pm.

In November 2019, onion prices reached Tk 250 as India banned export of onions.

Farmers in Bangladesh produced around 34 lakh tonnes of onion this year, but the country still has to import 6-7 lakh tonnes to meet the demand.

Onion prices first increased this year in August when India slapped a 40 percent tariff on export. When India set the export price in October, prices in Bangladesh went up further.

A week ago, prices of onions were Tk 105-125 in Dhaka.

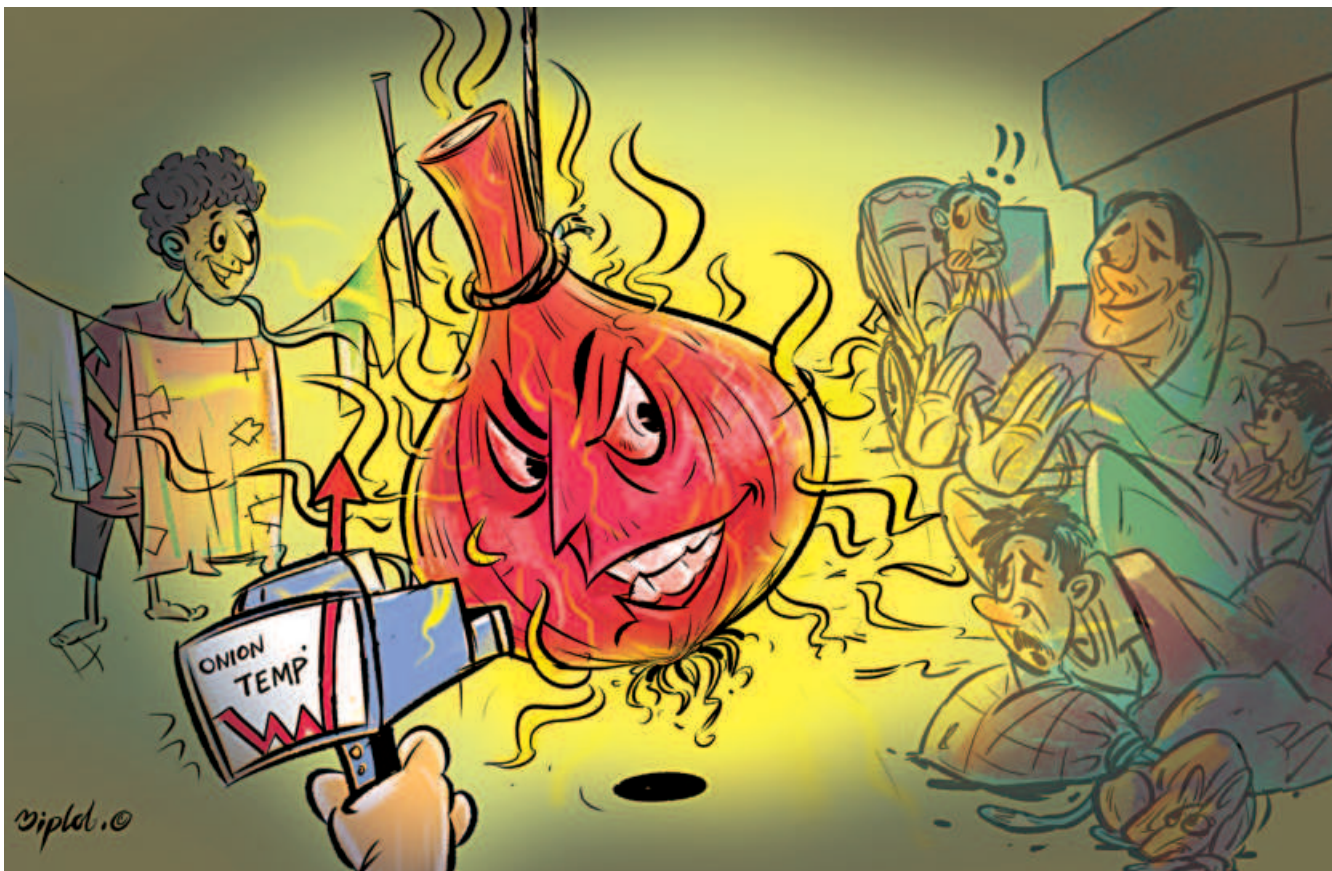
"Whom shall I ask about this? Traders are setting prices at whim. There is no remedy for us," said Mohammad Shiplu at Karwan Bazar.

Nurul Islam, a shopkeeper at Karwan Bazar, said, "There is a supply shortage. I went to Shyambazar wholesale market to buy at least 10 sacks of onions, but I could find only three."

Shaheen Hossain, who sells goods at wholesale, said a 42kg sack of the Indian variety was Tk 5,000-5,200 three days ago. But it became Tk 6,400 yesterday.



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An interesting day for Star

MAHFUZ ANAM

Yesterday, according to TV reports, the AL general secretary and the foreign minister commented on this paper -- one was an unsubstantiated perspective and the other a charade.

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader, responding to a question from a journalist that "Mahfuz Anam wrote that by not participating in the election BNP is facing an existential crisis", said, "The Daily Star has been supporting

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JP may walk if MPs not given cakewalk

Party chatter hints at withdrawal from polls if seat-sharing deal can't be reached with AL

RASHIDUL HASAN

Jatiya Party, the main opposition party in parliament, will stick to its demand to have the ruling Awami League candidates withdrawn from at least 23 constituencies, currently represented in the House by JP MPs, party insiders said.

It is being widely discussed within the JP that the party may quit the race if its demand is not met.

The decision regarding AL sharing seats with JP in the January 7 election is likely to be finalised within a day or two, JP sources said.

JP candidates, especially its top leaders, are worried about their polls prospects as the ruling party has strong opponents for the JP in their constituencies.

Several JP leaders said party Chairman

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EC starts appeals disposal today

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and ASIFUR RAHMAN

At least 30 aspirants appealed with the Election Commission challenging the returning officers' decision accepting the nomination bid of their opponents.

Ten of them are Awami League aspirants, who challenged the candidature of their party colleagues.

Seven of these 10 are AL's alternative candidates, who raised objections to the candidacy of their party picks, while three AL picks filed appeals against their fellow party rivals vying as independents.

Separately, a bank challenged the candidacy of Khadizatul Anwar, Awami League aspirant from Chattogram-2.

The Election Commission starts disposing of the appeals today, which will be completed by December 15, EC Secretary Jahangir Alam said.

In all, the EC received 731 appeals -- 701 against the returning officers' rejection and 30 against acceptance of the nomination papers.

In the last election, 786 nominations were cancelled by the ROs, and 546 aspirants challenged the decision. After appeals hearing, 245 were allowed to run, EC sources said.

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The father of an enforced disappearance victim pleads with the police to let them -- families of such victims -- demand the return of their loved ones yesterday, on the eve of the International Human Rights Day. Multiple hands of cops are seen trying to take away the mic the man is trying to keep in his grip. The demonstration was initially held near the National Museum, where this photograph was taken. As it was foiled by the law enforcers, the demonstrators moved near the Press Club.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

RMG WORKERS' LIFE AFTER PROTESTS Plagued by uncertainty

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

On November 14, Babul Hossain, general secretary of the Bangladesh Garment Workers Solidarity (BGWS), was nowhere to be found.

But his whereabouts were learnt 20 hours later: he was shown arrested on charges of rioting, arson and attempted murder along with 1,100 to 1,200 other "miscreants" in Gazipur.

The incident he was arrested for -- which was part of the twelve day-long protests of garment workers to press home their demand for near-tripling of wages -- took place on October 30. And Babul was nowhere near the demo, according to eyewitnesses and family members. In fact, he was in Ashulia.

Babul's unjust arrest is not an isolated case; many workers have been detained arbitrarily since then, leaving their families fighting for survival in the absence of their breadwinners, said Taslima Akter, president of BGWS.

And those who have not been apprehended yet are mulling whether the ultimately unsuccessful protests were even worth it given that their lives have definitively changed for the worse.

If it is not the fear of arrests under the 60-odd cases filed by the police implicating over 36,000 unidentified

workers and "miscreants" for the demos, then it is the hostile environment on their return to work that is troubling the sector's four million workers.

The Daily Star obtained and reviewed 20 case documents and in all the cases, the accused have been charged with similar crimes: vandalising factories, arson, threatening and assaulting staff (in some cases, attempted murder), blocking highways and obstructing governmental operations.

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

The correspondent visited Ashulia, Konabari and Mirpur areas and talked to numerous garment workers, who revealed the ordeal they are facing after calling off the protests.

After the cases were filed, police conducted numerous raids in the residential areas of Savar and Gazipur, mainly in neighbourhoods of Ashulia and Konabari, and picked up random people on suspicion of being part of the protests, they said.

For instance, police conducted raids in the early hours of November 13 and 14 at Konabari's Ambag area and randomly rounded up residents on

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Police foil Mayer Daak demos in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday obstructed the protests of Mayer Daak, a platform for the families of the victims of enforced disappearances, in front of the National Museum in the capital's Shahbagh on the eve of Human Rights Day.

Comprised mostly of women and children who lost family members to enforced disappearances, the group was barricaded off by cops in full riot gear. The police surrounded the protesters and prevented any visual access for cameras there to cover the event.

Another group of law enforcers drove away the rickshaws on which the portable loudspeakers, announcing the programme, were attached.

Anisa Islam Insha, 17-year-old daughter

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Celebrating the Recognition of The Largest LPG Importer in Mongla Port Industrial Area

৭৩তম প্রতিষ্ঠাবার্ষিকী মোংলা বন্দর কর্তৃপক্ষ

On the Occasion of the 73rd Foundation Day of Mongla Port Authority (MPA), Omera Petroleum Limited was awarded with the honour of the Largest LPG Importer in Mongla Port.

Talukder Abdul Khaleque, Mayor, Khulna City Corporation & Rear Admiral Mir Ershad Ali, OSP, NPP, NDC, PSC, BN, Chairman, MPA handed over the Award to Tanzeem Chowdhury, CEO, Omera Petroleum Limited.

Omera Family thanks the MPA for being the catalyst for its success and reaffirms its commitment to provide safe and secured supply of LP Gas to Households, Vehicles & Industries across Bangladesh & North Eastern States of India.

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