

Chickpeas Price Hike in Ramadan Feared

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A visit to the Dalpotti (pulse market) at Chawkbazar's Rahmatganj in the capital and conversation with traders of retail markets and consumers revealed that wholesalers were selling chickpeas at Tk 38-40 per kg to retail traders, who in turn were selling chickpeas to consumers at Tk 46-48 per kg.

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Shafiqul Islam, general secretary of Bangladesh Pulse Traders Association, told bdnews24.com that the import of chickpeas this year exceeded that from previous years. "The current stock of chickpeas is sufficient to meet the need of consumers and prices should not rise."

He continued that the demand for chickpeas during Ramadan is 70-90 metric tonnes, but that even in such circumstances Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), the government's trading arm, only provides two metric tonnes and the rest has to be supplied by chickpea traders.

Islam urged that the TCB is made more efficient in the future.

Explaining that chickpeas are imported from Australia, Islam said chickpeas of brands like "Dolphin," "Horses" and "Kangaroo" are being marketed locally.

The general secretary alleged that prices do not rise due to the practices of traders but that the market is destabilised because of some corrupt government officials.

Mohammed Sadek Hossain, a resident of Mohammadpur and a private bank official, told bdnews24.com that, keeping Ramadan in mind, he had bought chickpeas at Tk 48 per kg but was worried that "the price might hike up suddenly."

Hossain suggested that the government "should keep strict watch over the market to ensure that the prices do not rise."

President of Bangladesh Pulse Traders Association, Shafi Mahmud said while there is no crisis in supply in light with the current demands, he warned that "last year chickpea prices rose suddenly from Tk 40-45 per kg to Tk 60-65 per kg. The government should keep strict watch to stop it from happening this year."

A trader, on condition of anonymity, echoed the opinion that general traders were not involved in hiking market prices, but "leaders are involved." He continued that while "they are afraid to hike prices because of the government's strict stance. They will hike the prices if they get a chance."

He confirmed all wholesale traders had sufficient stock of chickpeas this year.

A survey of markets, including Karwan Bazar, Mohammadpur Agricultural Market and New Market revealed that chickpeas were being sold at Tk 46-48 per kg.

TCB chief officer Abu Hena Mostofa Kamal told bdnews24.com, "The target supply of chickpeas for the Ramadan has been set at two metric tonnes and a decision has been passed to sell chickpeas at a rate of Tk 44 per kilogramme."

Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) director and joint-convenor of its market supervision committee Mohammed Helaluddin told bdnews24.com a meeting will be held at the commerce ministry on Monday to reset market prices of pulse and chickpeas.

"The new price will be fixed then. If anyone sells them at higher prices afterwards, steps will be taken against them," he added.

Helaluddin claimed the market was being supervised specially to keep prices of products, including rice, sugar, edible oils and onions stable.

Source: bdnews24.com