

**High prices of commodities keep people frustrated**

LAHORE: With declining incomes and economic recession in the country, people are criticising the government for paying less attention to bringing down the prices of vegetables and essential grocery items in Sunday or model bazaars and the open market.

They say the situation they have been passing through for the last two years is going from bad to worse and the government should immediately focus on a single issue -- the price hike.

"I am surprised to see the prices of vegetables even in this bazaar which is organised and regulated exclusively by the government. And if you buy vegetables in the open market, you will find the rates almost double," deplored Azmat who visited Johar Town (Mian Plaza) Sunday / Model Bazaar.

"It is winter -- the season when the prices of most of vegetables decrease because of massive local produce. You just check price of cauliflower that is almost two to three times higher than it was a few years ago. But who cares?"

Moreover, the prices of the vegetables were almost 50 to 80 per cent higher in the open market.

The flour (chakki) prices also climbed to Rs70 or so in the open market while the imported sugar (powdered) is available at Rs85. The chicken meat price is also on higher side as it is available in the market at Rs313 per kg. But at various shops, the shopkeepers were found selling it at Rs330 per kg.

According to Lahore Market Committee Secretary Shahzad Cheema, the price of onion increased after the government allowed export of local produce to Bahrain, the UAE, Sri Lanka and other countries.

"Our neighbouring country imposed a ban on export on onion and other vegetables. But Pakistan did this despite knowing the situation. However, our government recently imposed ban on export of locally produced onion. Hopefully, the price will reduce soon," he added.

Mr Cheema was of the view that the prices of vegetables would come down soon as the local produce had started coming to wholesale markets.

"The price of potato rose due to getting it from Gilgit and other cities. But, next month, our Punjab potato would start coming (in adequate quantity) and it will reduce retail price. Similarly, the price of onion will reduce due to imposition of ban on export," he said.

Cheema said the price of tomato would also decrease soon due to the decision of importing it from Iran.

He said the decrease in number of magistrates is also among reasons behind improper control of prices.