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## Spiralling prices burn huge hole in pocket

### Fruits Are Hit The Hardest, Vegetables Too Not Far Behind

#### TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Skyrocketing prices of essential commodities are making Delhiites see red. With the festival season barely over, prices of vegetables, fruits, oils and pulses have hit the roof, burning a hole in the pockets of residents and completely upsetting monthly household budgets.

The worst increase has been in the price of fruits, which now cost double of what they did last month. Small retailers blame the government's export policy for the drastic jump and say unless steps are taken, prices may well increase even more next month. Savour this, the Mumbai Alphonso is available for Rs 800 a dozen at present, the only good news being that when they came into the market, they were selling for Rs 2,000. Seasonal fruits like apples, grapes and oranges are also nearing the Rs 100 mark. Fruits like chikoo and papaya are available for about Rs 25/kg, up from Rs 10-12/kg last month.

Vegetables are not far behind either. Basic vegetables like tomatoes and onions have become costlier. From Rs 10-11/kg last month, tomatoes are now selling for Rs 24/kg. Green vegetables are also expensive but that, explain wholesalers, is only because they are an early crop. But for other vegetables and fruits, dealers are as stumped with the price rise as the consumers.

"We have not yet been able to determine what is causing this rise. Earlier some people suggested that exports had been increased and supply within the country had reduced. But that is not the case. Demand and supply are balanced and the production has been satisfactory. We have never seen such a strange market phenomenon earlier," said Bhram Yadav, chairman of the Delhi Agriculture Board.

Traders are also blaming the price rise on spiralling transport costs. However, officials have countered the theory stating that it did not justify doubling of prices. But there is some hope. Green vegetables are likely to become cheaper in the next few days when crops will start coming in.

And that's not all. Pulses and grains have also seen a steep climb in prices as have bottled water and chicken and mutton. Dals like arhar, masoor and malka have become dearer by at least Rs 10/kg each. Packaged rice and packaged tea have also become more expensive. A 20 litre canister of mineral water now costs Rs 10 more than what it did some time earlier.

Mutton and chicken prices have also shot up, though this time there is an explanation for the phenomenon. The government has directed traders to carry only a specific number of livestock in a truck, thereby reducing supply in the mandi. Mutton is available for Rs 170/kg while chicken is available for Rs 44/kg.

Making matters worse is the fact that retailers in several areas have started charging arbitrarily. Tomatoes that are available elsewhere for Rs 24/kg can be found for even Rs 40/kg in south Delhi.

Compared to Mother Dairy prices, retailers seem to be having a field day. Lemon, for instance, is being sold for Rs 80/kg in retail while it is available for Rs 64 in Mother Dairy.

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## SHARP HIKE IN A MONTH

### Vegetables Wholesale

	March 1 (in Rs/kg)	Today (in Rs/kg)
Ladies finger	20	23-36
Bitter gourd	25	30
Cauliflower	2.50-3	7-8
Tomato	8-10	16-20
Onion	4.50	6
Green chillies	15-20	22-25



### Vegetables Retail

	March 1 (in Rs/kg)	Today (in Rs/kg)
Ladies finger	20-35	24-40
Bitter gourd	30-35	40-50
Cauliflower	10-11	14-15
Tomato	18-20	22-24
Onion	6-7	10-12
Green chillies	30-34	35-40

### Fruits Retail

	March 1 (Rs/kg)	Today (Rs/kg)
Apples	40	60
Papaya	10	15-20
Orange (dozen)	40	70
Chikoo	12	20-25
Grapes	30	50
Pomegranate	30-40	50-80



### Pulses/Oil Retail

	March 1 (in Rs/kg)	Today (in Rs/kg)
Arhar	38-40	45
Chana dal	35	40
Masoor (1a)	40	52
Malka	40	52
Rice (loose)	24	28
(packaged)	50	65
Flour	140	150
Sugar (loose)	17	17.50
(packaged)	20	22
Packaged tea	223	243
Bisleri (20 litre)	60	70
Refined oil	60	70-80
Mustard oil	60	68