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Govt denies fuel crisis, price hike plan

Saifur blames media for price increase 'rumour'; energy adviser says situation to improve within 72 hours

STAR REPORT
Amid rumour of a potential fuel price hike leading to hoarding of fuels by unscrupulous traders, especially in the northern districts, the government yesterday denied any shortage of fuel in the country and said it has no plan to increase the prices soon.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman at a meeting in Moulvibazar yesterday denied ever saying that the fuel prices would be increased. "We are not increasing the oil prices at this moment," he said.

Labelling the media report as "misreport" and "media havoc", he said there is no crisis of fuel in the country, reports our correspondent in the district.

Energy Adviser Mahmudur Rahman also told the press that the ministry has neither sent any proposal to the prime minister requesting to increase the fuel prices nor does it have any plan to propose the government to do so soon.

He told reporters that the situation will improve within 48-72 hours.

He also asked the district commissioners (DCs) to identify unusual buying of fuels by the dealers during the last week.

Meanwhile, reports of severe fuel crisis came yesterday as unprincipled owners of filling stations stopped selling fuels at places in the northern districts where six vessels with 42 lakh tonne fuel have been stranded in the river in Bera upazila of Pabna for the last 12 days.

The price of kerosene yesterday shot up to Tk 50 per litre at some places while petrol was selling at Tk 100 per litre.

BANGLADESH POLITICS US, EU come up with identical views

Taking a cue from the political ground reality, the United States (US) and the European Union (EU) emerged with almost identical views on Bangladesh's upcoming parliamentary election, terming it crucial and critical for democracy, economic development and stability of the country.



Railway tankers carrying oil departs Tongi station for the fuel hungry northern districts yesterday in the wake of a petroleum crisis in the region.

POOR NAVIGABILITY 55 vessels remain stuck for 15 days in Jamuna

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, from Pabna
Fifty-five vessels including 10 laden with rice and seven carrying fuel remain stranded in the Jamuna at Shahjadpur in Pabna for about 15 days due to poor navigability.

The situation arose as dredging work at a three-kilometre channel of the river from Mohonganj to Penchakola in Nakalia, Shahjadpur remains suspended due to strong current.

Workers yesterday were seen unloading goods from the stranded vessels to small boats along the 25-kilometre waterway from Baghabari river port to Nakalia to take those to the port.

Gas supply in Ctg snapped for 11 hours

BDNEWS, Ctg
Gas supply in nearly half of the port city, including Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ), remained stopped for 11 hours due to technical glitch in distribution system since early yesterday.



Army men install water purification filters on the bank of the Turag for the Biswa Ijtema devotees yesterday. The three-day congregation concludes today.

IMF'S ANTI-POVERTY LOAN Govt seeks waiver of a few conditions

Fund board meets Feb 3

REZAUL KARIM BYRON
Bangladesh has requested the IMF to waive a few conditions for the fifth tranche of its Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF) loan.

If everything goes right, Bangladesh will get around \$75 million as the fifth PRGF tranche and some \$25 million as the last instalment of Trade Integration Mechanism (TIM) from the International Monetary Fund sometime in February.

The PRGF tranche along with Bangladesh's request for waiver of some conditions, the TIM instalment and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) are likely to be tabled at the IMF executive board meeting slated for February 3.

Rocca leaves UNB, Dhaka

US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Christina Rocca left Dhaka yesterday morning for Washington, ending her three-day visit.

Rocca came here on Thursday, met the government and opposition leaders and discussed what she said country's two major challenges for free and fair elections and combating militancy.

This was Rocca's fourth and last visit to Bangladesh.

Rejoinder, our reply

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a rejoinder said the headline and the references made in The Daily Star report "Curb terror finance, militancy to skirt US sanctions -- Rocca tells Dhaka" to so-called "sanctions" are grossly incorrect, baseless and misleading. The ministry

14-PARTY 'LONG MARCH' ON FEB 2

Workers to gather at 4 points before entering Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Grassroots leaders and activists of the Awami League-led 14-party opposition coalition will start their 'long march' towards Dhaka from all corners of the country on February 2 which is supposed to culminate in a massive gathering of people in the capital on February 5 as part of an ongoing movement to 'topple' the government.

SIDDHESWARI COLLEGE

Students assault principal, demand his ouster for graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
A group of students yesterday assaulted the principal of the Siddheswari University College and vandalised the windowpanes of his office, demanding his removal for alleged corruption.

Mass promotions lead to record OSDs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Large-scale promotions of government officials have resulted in a record number of officials getting OSD (officers on special duty) status.

After the promotion of 378 senior assistant secretaries to the post of deputy secretary (DS) on January 26, the number of OSDs has become 463.

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