

UREA CRISIS

Agitation in Nilphamari, rationing in Gaibandha

STAR NATIONAL DESK

IRRI-Boro is being affected in northern districts of Nilphamari and Gaibandha due to crisis of urea, prompting farmers to put up demonstrations.

Hardly a day passes without reports of demonstration in either districts as fertiliser-hungry farmers, after standing for hours in queues, block roads or besiege dealers' shops.

Our Nilphamari Correspondent reports: Farmers yesterday put up demonstrations in front of some dealers' shops in the town, but the dealers had nothing to do as there was no supply.

To face the situation, the authorities yesterday allotted urea to four dealers in the Sadar upazila. The dealers later lifted 640 bags of urea from Parbatipur depot and distributed those among farmers in the afternoon. This was almost a drop in the ocean and many of the farmers returned home empty handed, sources said. There are 74 dealers in Nilphamari district.

Urea is supplied here from Parbatipur, where the buffer stock was exhausted two days ago as carrying contractors refused to carry fertiliser from factory to godowns, demanding higher freight.

Carrying contractors are given Tk 25 per 50 kg bag to carry fertiliser from Parbatipur to Nilphamari, which was Tk 15 earlier. But they are still reluctant to carry fertiliser, Abdul Wahed, president of Nilphamari unit of Bangladesh Fertiliser Association (BFA), told this correspondent.

Wahed said the Parbatipur depot got about 20 truckloads of fertiliser yesterday, which will be



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers raising slogans in front of a dealer's shop at Nilphamari Bazar yesterday for supply of fertiliser.

exhausted in a day or two. One truck carries about six tonnes of fertiliser.

For the last one month, fertiliser is being given to one dealer alternately in each upazila because of short supply, Wahed said.

On Thursday, Nilphamari BFA urged the agriculture ministry through the Deputy Commissioner to allot additional 2000 tonnes of urea for the district.

The Agriculture Extension Department (AED) also sent a note to the ministry for allotment of 9,000 tonnes of urea for Nilphamari. But the ministry allotted 5,476 tonnes, AED sources said.

The 74 fertiliser dealers in the district got only 3,000 tonnes till 18 march, Wahed said.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent reports:

Crisis of urea is prevailing all over the district during the current peak season of IRRI-Boro cultivation.

Farmers are seen queuing in front of dealers' shops. Many of them return home without fertiliser.

In the district town, only two dealers are allotted 44 tonnes of fertiliser on alternate days, which is scanty to the requirement, dealers said.

The District Fertiliser Monitoring Committee recently said there is no crisis of fertiliser. But farmers in remote areas said they have to buy a 50 kg bag of urea at Tk. 360 to Tk 380 against the government fixed price of Tk 295. The price hike is due to short supply and alleged

hoarding by a section of dealers, some retailers at Rupar Bazar in Gaibandha Sadar upazila said.

According to the district Agriculture Extension Department (AED), demand of urea in Gaibandha for March is 11,142 tonnes. But the stock is almost exhausted, sources in AED said. The authorities have a stock of 1,742 tonnes of China-made urea, produced in 2001, which is not taken by farmers as it is not useful for crops, they said.

In view of the short supply, the District Fertiliser Monitoring Committee introduced rationing, giving only one bag to a farmer. This will continue till the next supply from Jamuna Fertilizer Factory reaches, sources said.

Arrested JMB man details plan in Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Arrested Jama'atul Mujahedein Bangladesh (JMB) Ehsar member Tarikul Islam yesterday confessed to his involvement in the August 17 bomb blasts in Sirajganj town.

Tarikul Islam, 28, son of Abu Bakkar of Jamua village in Kamar Khanda upazila, was arrested Sunday evening from Shaikhola area when he was trying to flee the town in a bus. He was absconding since the August 17 blasts.

Earlier, on March 15, his father Abu Bakkar was arrested from a graveyard in Khamarpai Kosha in the Sadr upazila on charge of involvement with the JMB.

Both the father and the son are being interrogated by Detective Branch police.

Police said they got important information from Tarikul about JMB activities in the district.

Tarikul told police that JMB cadres blasted nine bombs in Sirajganj town on August 17 last year. Tarikul however denied his father's involvement with JMB.

He also disclosed who else were involved in the blasts and how these were planned but police declined to give details for the sake of investigation.

Ex-SI held on murder charge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested a former police sub-inspector, an accused in three murder cases.

Acting on a tip-off, a team from Rab8 raided the Golbonia village home of Nurul Haque, 60, in the Sadar upazila are arrested him.

Police said Nurul Haque was a 'listed criminal'.

In other drives, police arrested Sattar, 38, from the launch terminal area and alleged drug peddler Somerta Banu, 50, from Katpatti area in the town on the same day. Police said Sattar was wanted in connection with two murder cases.

Shibir leader Salehi's arrest demanded at RU

Students hold rally, take out procession

RU CORRESPONDENT

The Greater Rangpur Students Forum at Rajshahi University yesterday took out a silent procession and held a rally on the campus demanding arrest and punishment to killers of Prof S Taher Ahmed and Prof Muhammad Yunus.

They also submitted a memorandum to Vice-chancellor Prof Altaf Hossain at his office and demanded immediate investigation of the murders and arrest of the killers.

They also informed the VC that the RU unit of Islami Chhtra Shibir (ICS), student front of Jamaat-e-Islami, has formed a new student body at the university styled North

Bengal Students Forum to protect Mahub Alam Salehi, RU unit president of Shibir, a suspected killer of Prof Taher.

Leaders of Greater Rangpur Students Forum at the rally in front of Central Library announced that they would hold silent processions on the campus every Monday protesting the killing of the two teachers.

Meanwhile, leaders of RU unit of Bangladesh Chhtra League (BCL), student front of Awami League, yesterday said that some newspapers supporting Jamaat-Shibir published fabricated news in a bid to implicate some BCL leaders in the murder of Prof Taher.

At a press conference on the campus, they protested the news items and said Jamaat-Shibir leaders are trying to protect Prof Taher's alleged killer Salehi.

They also demanded a neutral investigation into Prof Taher murder and arrest of Salehi.

They threatened of tougher agitation if Salehi is not arrested and punished.

RU BCL president Ibrahim Hossain Moon, general secretary Ayeen Uddin and join secretary Masud Rana spoke the press conference.



PHOTO: STAR

Police intercepting a Chhatra League procession brought out in Chittagong city yesterday protesting privatisation of New Mooring container terminal.

JMB cadre Sabbir to be quizzed in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

JMB cadre Sabbir Ahmed Dulal will be brought back to Brahmanbaria from Sylhet soon for interrogation, police sources said yesterday.

Sabbir has been shown arrested in the August 17 blasts in the town following confessions by four other JMB cadres, arrested here on Wednesday.

Police sought 10 days' remand for Sabbir for interrogation regarding JMB activities and the August 17 blasts. A court granted the police prayer yesterday, the sources said.

Sabbir of Brahmanbaria was

Law to protect consumers rights demanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Speakers at a discussion held here yesterday blamed the government for failure to ensure smooth supply of electricity.

Held at Satkhira Unnayan Kendra in the town, the discussion, 'Energy: Sustainable Access for All' was organised by Satkhira Chapter of Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) to mark the International Consumers' Rights Day. Principal Asit Kumar Majumdar presided the discussion.

They called upon the government to enact proposed Consumers Rights Protection Act immediately for protection of consumers and genuine businessmen alike.



Sabbir Ahmed Dulal

arrested from a saloon in Paltan in Dhaka city on March 8 by a team of Brahmanbaria police and brought to Brahmanbaria. Later he was sent to Sylhet for interrogation in a case filed against JMB kingpin Abdur Rahman there after Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) found his (Sabbir) cheque book (account No. 11674 of Janata Bank in Brahmanbaria) during the operation at Surjadigal Bari in Sylhet city from where JMB chief Abdur Rahman was arrested.

Police sources said Sabbir used to look after financing JMB activities in Brahmanbaria.

The four JMB cadres—Alamgir, Sohel, Arafat and Sheikh Muhammad Sumon-- arrested here on Wednesday, confessed their involvement in the August 17 bomb blast.

According to their confessions, 11 JMB cadres took part in the blasts and they were given Tk 1.5 lakh for this.

Police hope that they would get more vital information from Sabbir. A manhunt is on in the district for the rest 7 JMB cadres, police said.

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