

Baghabari fuel depots run out of supplies

Three barges stuck up in Jamuna shoals

GOLAM MOSTAFA JIBON, back from Nakalia, Pabna

Diesel price has increased by Tk 2 to Tk 3 per litre in Sirajganj and adjoining districts due to short supply as depots of three oil companies in Baghabari can not be replenished.

Fuel-carrying barges can not reach Baghabari ghat due to fall in Jamauna water in Pabna, officials of the three companies at Baghabari said yesterday.

Officials of Padma, Neghna and Jamauna oil depots at Baghabari said three barges of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) with about 90 lakh litres of diesel remained stuck up in underwater shoals on Jamuna river near Nakalia

in Pabna district since Sunday. This correspondent yesterday visited Nakalia and saw the barges stranded in Jamuna shoals.

Anisur Rahman, Master of MV Jarina and Abul Hashem, Master of MV Faysal said that, their barges faced navigation problem on Padma in Hasail area in Munshiganj first. Now their barges are stuck up at Nakalia.

In Sirajganj, most of the fuel pumps stopped sale on Monday. Some pumps owners said they procured small quantities from Parbotipur depot. This involved higher cost, they claimed.

While talking to this correspondent yesterday, some pump owners and employees said that, their tank lorries

returned empty from Baghabari after waiting in long queues as stock with Padma, Meghna and Jamuna oil companies were exhausted.

Taking the advantage of disruption in supply, some dishonest fuel dealers who stocked diesel earlier, have increased prices by Tk 2 to Tk 3 per litre, they said.

Some transport owners and workers said they bought diesel from some unauthorised dealers and traders at higher prices.

When asked about the price hike, some pump owners seeking anonymity said they increased the price as carrying cost rose for bringing fuel from other depots.

Abul Bashar, in-charge of

Jamuna depot in Baghabari, said movement of oil tankers and barges are obstructed on Jamuna channel near Nakalia, Pechakola and Mohonganj due to shallow water in Padma and they can not reach Baghabari Ghat on schedule. This is creating short supply and scarcity, he added.

The problem will turn acute if the Jamuna channel is not dredged immediately. The water level will fall drastically in November-December, he said.

He said oil company authorities in Baghabari have written letters to district administrations in Sirajganj and Pabna and to IWTA authorities to look into the problem immediately.



A citizens' body procession in Rajshahi city yesterday for polls reforms.

Huge rally demanding electoral reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Sammilito Nagorik Andolon (SNA), a citizens' body in Rajshahi city, yesterday brought out a huge procession and held a rally demanding electoral reforms and resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner.

The demonstrators also protested the price spiral of essentials and crises of power and water.

The processionists started from Shaheb Bazar At 11 am and converged again to the same place after parading the city streets. People from all walks of life joined the procession.

The processionists carried placards reading Justice Hasan, please feel embarrassed, no election under Hasan-Aziz, Khaleda-Nizami's development brings hunger for countrymen, champion in corruption etc.

The rally was held at the Zero Pint with SNA convener Prof Shafiqur Rahman Badsha in the chair.

Ransahahi unit president of

Bangabandhu Parishad and former Rajshahi University vice-chancellor Prof Abdul Khalek, Sammilito Sangskritik Jote general secretary Dr Sayed Shafiqul Alam, College Teachers Association central vice president Prof Saidur Rahman, Rajshahi Union of Journalists president Hasan Millat addressed the rally, among others.

Mukhtijoddha Sangsad Rajshahi city commander Shafiqur Rahman Raja, its leader Yasin Ali, Natore SNA president Sukhamoy Dev, Rajshahi city Ekatturer Ghatok Dalal Nimul Committee secretary Prof Kamruzzaman also spoke at the rally.

The speakers alleged that the BNP-Jamaat alliance government in last five years allowed unbridled corruption in all sectors, distorted the history of the Liberation War, gave rise to Islamist militants and politicised the administration.

They are now trying to cling to power by holding a farcical election by appointing their men as chief of the caretaker government.

They congratulated Dr Yunus for making the country proud by winning the Nobel Prize.



PHOTO: STAR

Tank lorries queue for diesel at Baghabari depot in Sirajganj yesterday (left) and a fuel-carrying barge stuck up in an underwater shoal in Padma in Nakalia.

Jaldhaka BNP leader, 6 aides get life for abduction, rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A BNP leader and six others were sentenced to life term imprisonment by a special tribunal here yesterday in a sensational abduction and rape case.

The convicts are Jaldhaka upazila BNP president and Jaldhaka Poursabha chairman Anwarul Kabir Chowdhury and his accomplices Ashraf, Jamat Ali, Rashidul, Hafizul, Bahadur and Selim for helping Kabir. Of them, Bahadur absconded.

Judge Idris Alam of the Special Tribunal on Prevention of Repression on Women and Children, Nilphamari, pronounced the verdict in a crowded courtroom after examining 17 witnesses at 11 am yesterday. The court also ordered Kabir to pay a fine of Tk 10,000.

The prosecution story, in brief, is that Anwarul Kabir Chowdhury and his aides abducted housewife Morsheda Begum and her four-year-old son from Moulavi Bazar village at night on July 31 last year.

Morsheda, wife of Jahinur Rahman of Cherenga in Jaldhaka Poursabha was returning home from his elder sister's house at Uttar Deshibai village in Kathali union, Jaldhaka. The abductors brought Morsheda to Jaldhaka Poursabha office where Anwarul Kabir Chowdhury raped her till she was rescued by police the next day. After her rescue, Morsheda filed a case against Kabir and six of his accomplices under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act on August 1.

Hearing the verdict, all the accused chanted slogans in the courtroom against Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury for what they said masterminding a 'conspiratorial case'.

After the verdict, agitation mounted among Kabir's supporters who gathered in hundreds near the court since morning. A large contingent of police along with Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) was deployed on the court premises. They dispersed the crowd from there.

In a reaction, victim Morsheda said she was not happy as 'life term to the main accused was not enough in regard to his crime'. But her lawyer Advocate Abdul Latif Sarkar expressed satisfaction over the verdict.

On contact, Kabir's wife Farida Begum she will move to higher court for appeal. She lamented that her husband had become a victim of his rival Jamaat lawmaker Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury.

When contacted, Jaldhaka BNP acting president Omar Faruque said they are planning to quit the party as it gave in to Jamaat conspiracy.

Kabir-led BNP and incumbent lawmaker Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury-led Jamaat were engaged in bloody clashes in Jaldhaka for the last two years for establishing supremacy in the area and for ensuring 4-party Alliance candidature.

Earlier, High Court granted bail to all the accused but the absconder. On expiry of the bail period, they appeared before lower court here and sought bail on October 2, 2005. But refusing bail, the court sent them to jail.



PHOTO: STAR

Police trying to control supporters of Anwarul Kabir who crowded the Nilphamari judge court compound yesterday during delivery of verdict.

Tangail municipality withdraws fresh taxes in face of protest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Tangail municipal authorities yesterday withdrew the increased municipal taxes in the face of protests by townspeople.

It happened when the municipal office was besieged by people who demonstrated under the newly formed 'Pourabashi Swartha Sanakkhan Sangram Committee' (a citizens' committee to protect interests of citizens).

The citizens' committee yesterday organised a mass procession and besieged the Tangail municipal office as per its earlier programme to protest the enhanced municipal taxes.

In the morning, several hundred people came in processions from different areas of the town and joined a protest rally on Shaheed

Minar premises in the town.

With former municipal commissioner MA Majid in the chair, the rally was addressed by, among others, Sangram Committee leaders Murad Siddiqui, Shamsul Haque Jamal, Jatiya Party (Ershad) leaders Mozammel Haque and Asaduzzaman Babul, BNP leaders Sadequ Alam Khoka and Ataur Rahman Jinnah, former commissioner Mahmudul Haque Alo, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader Tariqul Islam Jhalak, Chhatra League leader Masudur Rahman, Akram Hossen Kisl, advocate AL Ruh, Shafiqul Alam Tushar, Prashanta Pal Chowdhury and Khondaker Abdur Rob.

Speakers at the rally said the townspeople will not pay the enhanced taxes and build up tougher

agitation if those are not withdrawn.

At one stage, Sangram Committee leader Murad Siddiqui gave 10 minutes time to municipality authorities for withdrawing the proposed enhanced taxes.

In absence of municipal chairman Jamilur Rahman Miron, five ward commissioners came to the Shaheed Minar. Among them, Ward Commissioner Nurul Alam spoke on behalf of the municipal chairman.

He declared withdrawal of the enhanced taxes and said those will not be imposed.

Prior to the rally, angry town dwellers burnt the effigy of municipal chairman Jamilur Rahman Miron at Niralar More and chanted slogans against him.

The Sangram Committee held rallies in different areas of the town

in last few days and mooted its besiege programme.

Municipal Chairman Jamilur Rahman Miron at a press conference at Tangail Press Club on Tuesday claimed that taxes were not increased for all. Additional taxes were imposed only on citizens who expanded their houses recently and in areas where development programmes like drain construction and conservancy have been started, he said.

The besiege programme is a conspiracy by some vested quarters, intended only to foil development programmes, he had said.

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