

Licence-less petrol shops doing brisk business

By Sharier Khan

Over 100 small shops selling petrol and other motor oils are operating in the city illegally supplied with stocks from both government and private vehicles.

Some dishonest car drivers sell petrol to these shops at Taka 40 to 45 per gallon. On the other hand, these unlicensed shops sell the same at Taka 55 per gallon. Authorised petrol stations sell a gallon at Taka 64 (Taka 13 per litre).

Such petrol shops, built with a few drums, pipes, oil measuring units and cans can be seen at Mirpur Section No 12 and 10, Mohammadpur, Gulshan, Mohakhali, Moghbazar, Motijheel, Syedabad, Nilkhet, Kalabagan, Nimtoli and other places.

Car drivers avail the first chance to take their owners cars to these shops to make a quick illegal sale, according to a petrol vendor at Nilkhet, adding that a driver at times sells 5 to 10 gallons at a time.

"My clients are always steady," one vendor said, "I've known many of them for over a year. Some sell four to five gallons, others sell less than 10."

The oil collection method by the vendors is simple: They syphon the petrol off the cars into their cans, witnesses say.

Although they sell at lower prices drivers prefer not to buy oil from them. "As the vendors syphon petrol off the cars, petrol is found mixed with mobil oil," said a driver who had bought a gallon from one such shop.

"But this is not my car, and buying a few gallons would not harm this engine," he said.

Although many of these shops had started their operations since the early 80s without licences only a few of them have been shut by the police.

In a candid statement, one vendor said that the authorities were aware that they had been selling petrol without any licence for a long time but were silent because they were being bribed regularly.

"You cannot check it from the upper level, because we pay them a small amount regularly," a vendor said, "and you cannot prevent the drivers from selling oil to us as they do not get good salaries."

"I send my brother to a kindergarten school," a driver, who illegally sells petrol to vendors said, "and I have to run a family of six. That leaves me no choice but to commit a little crime."

Preferring anonymity, a police officer admitted knowing of only a few such shops and said, "sometimes action is taken although not very seriously."

When contacted the Officer-in-Charge of Ramna thana expressed his ignorance about the existence of such shops. But he said that the police would look into the matter.

The brighter side of these petrol shops, according to some drivers, is that they stay open for almost 24 hours and observe no strike.

It is also interesting that only with a few exceptions tempo and baby taxi drivers buy their oil. Public service transports never buy their oil, the vendors say.



Dhaka City Unit of the Five-Party Alliance brought out a procession yesterday demanding trial of Golam Azam. — Star photo

Bureaucratic tangles hamper

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Bomang chief of Bandarban would be allowed to attend the council meetings and give their opinions in the discussions.

A general election was held in June 1989 in which over 200 candidates took part for the posts in the three councils and the elected representatives took office in July the same year.

Initially the district government councils were placed under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, but later were placed under the Special Affairs Ministry, specifically created for the CHT region. The chairmen of the three councils were also given the status of deputy minister.

Describing it as a 'new concept', the Chairman of the Khagrachari district local government council Shamiran Dewan pointed out that the system was not 'working well because of bureaucratic hurdles and the lack of coordination between the council and the administration.'

He alleged that a 'step-motherly' attitude existed towards the council by the administration. "They behave in such a way as if we do not deserve the power vested in us."

He said that only three departments were handed over to the councils during the first one-and-a-half year. "Only 12 of the 22 departments have been handed over to us so far and the ones handed over have been done half-way."

Goutam Dewan, Chairman of the Rangamati hill district local government council, noted that in early 1991, the three councils sent an ultimatum to the government demanding the transfer of all the 22 departments to them by December of the same year.

"Because of the extended delay in handing over of the departments to the councils, the people against the system became somewhat successful in their propaganda in trying to down play the gains," he said.

Saying that he has not been allowed to work freely because of a lack of coordination with the administration, he noted "settling up the system is not the big thing but allowing it to work freely is more important."

The Chairman of the Bandarban hill district local government council, Saching Pruc also agreed with the assessment of the other two chairmen and added that non-cooperation by the administration existed in some instances and "coordination with different ministries and the Special Affairs Ministry is very difficult and time consuming."

Saching Pruc also pointed out that the ministries did not make any distinction between the three councils and the other 61 districts while issuing directives.

"Furthermore, no specific clarification has been issued regarding the exact relationship between the councils and the central government," he added.

District administration officials, however, denied charges that the administration did not cooperate with the councils.

A senior district administration official of Khagrachari, requesting anonymity, alleged that implementation of the system was being hampered because of the "inexperience and inefficiency" of the council members. He also charged that there was "blatant" corruption in the affairs of the Khagrachari council.

The District Commissioner of Rangamati acknowledged that there were some adjustment problems because of overlapping in some areas.

Saying that his job was to "assist" the council in functioning smoothly, he noted "but my role is not well-defined and clear." He also pointed out that the hill districts were facing problems in providing permanent land rights to the residents as no land survey ever took place in the region.

A senior official of the security forces in Kaptai said that there was some resentment among the local people over the delay in handing over the 22 departments to the local government council. He also pointed out that clashes between the tribal and non-tribal council members were reported in Rangamati.

There is resentment about the activities of the local government councils among the non-tribal population in the region.

"The council has totally failed in its primary objective to motivate the local populace and gain support for the system," said the Secretary of the Rangamati Press Club, Mokhesur Rahman Bhuiyan. He slated the council's failure to pass any resolution condemning the killings by the Shantibahini.

Allegations of the chairman's favouring his own tribe, the Chakmas, over the other tribes in the Rangamati area were also brought by Philip Tripura, a local trader.

The Publicity Secretary of the Khagrachari Krishak Sramik Kalyan Parishad, Dr Md Mafizur Rahman Talukder, said that the non-tribals had been turned into "second-class" citizens through the implementation of the system. Initially, we accepted the system hoping that it will bring about a political solution, but that has not been the case," he added.

Despite the apparent shortcomings of the system and the difficulty in implementing it, all sides agreed that the local government councils could help bring about a political solution to the problems of the CHT region.

"It will take at least two to three terms for the councils to become fully operational," observed the security forces official.

Prasanna Kangchanya, member of the Rangamati district local government council, agreed with the above assessment and added "if we are patient and work according to the agreed plan than I think the CHT problem can be solved."

"There is no alternative to this system," said Goutam Dewan, adding that he was hopeful that the problems could be solved as there was democratic government in power and they could take the right steps. "I will always support the system even if I don't run for office the next time," he pledged.

Khagrachari Chairman Shamiran Dewan said, "I can give a written statement that if all the promised provisions in the bills passed by Parliament are implemented, the problems of this region will be solved and we can rehabilitate the shantibahinis and the refugees."

First batch of Hajj pilgrims in Jeddha

JEDDAH, May 16: The first batch of 301 Bangladeshi Pilgrims arrived here early this morning from Dhaka by a special Hajj flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, reports BSS.

Bangladesh ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Abdul Momen Choudhury received the pilgrims at the Hajj terminal of King Abdul Aziz International Airport here.

All the pilgrims were safe and sound. Consul General S K Sharif Hassan, officials of the consulate general and Biman Bangladesh Airlines, members of medical and logistic and welfare teams and members of community were also present on the occasion.

The ambassador welcomed the pilgrims to Jeddah and prayed for their good health so that they could perform pilgrimage in peace and comfort. He assured the pilgrims that all-out help and assistance would be extended during their pilgrimage.

PM: Harmony

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1978 and arrangement was made for preservation of the sacred ashes in this monastery with high honour. It was president Ziaur Rahman who had taken the initiative for construction of a memorial monument for Atish Dipankar in this very premises, she added.

The Prime Minister said the present government inheriting the legacy of Shaheed Zia has taken some concrete measures for the welfare of the community.

Five Buddhist religious libraries and centres at a cost of nearly one crore taka have been established in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban for religious education and cultivation of Buddhism. A number of other Buddhist religious institutions have received financial support of the government for their renovation.

Begum Khaleda Zia said the government was actively considering to increase the fund for Buddhist Religious Welfare Trust and undertake the project for translation and publication of the Tripitak in Bengali.

Begum Khaleda Zia said the government had also extended support and cooperation equally to the followers of other religions. During the current financial year the government had extended financial assistance to nearly 800 Hindu religious institutions. She said the government has taken measures for repair of 70 Hindu temples in 14 districts which had been damaged during the autocratic rule in a planned way to achieve its narrow political interest.

The Prime Minister said the Buddhists of Bangladesh who are linked in religious bond with world Buddhist community could make important contributions to project the image of Bangladesh in the international arena.

She said the Buddhist monastery at Kamalapur as a centre of the entire Buddhist community of the country should remain as a symbol for development of Buddhist culture. She paid tributes to the immortal memory of Lord Buddha on this most sacred day and conveyed her greetings to the followers of Buddhism in Bangladesh and all over the world.

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Vigilant role

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However, Rahman called for realistic reappraisal of the thought and actions of the movement in order to make them more pragmatic to suit the needs of time.

Cooperation rather than confrontation and dialogue instead of distrust are the need today, he said and added that re-orientation of the approach would help the movement attain its goal of securing peace and stability on a global scale.

The Foreign Minister said the encouraging changes notwithstanding, simmering discontent and violent conflicts continue to ravage some parts of the world and pointed to such regions like the Middle East.

It is necessary that peace is brought to such trouble spots by removing the sources of tensions and conflicts, he said.

Speaking about the economic issues, Rahman said the global economic scenario continues to be complex and alarming with the gap between the affluent North and the impoverished South continuing to pose a grave threat to international security. He called for remedial measures to secure a better world.

Velayati

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the two Foreign Ministers will take place on Monday.

Dr Velayati is expected to call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia soon after his arrival in the morning.

He will fly to Teknaf to see for himself the " Rohingya " refugees in the camps there.

The Midnight File

Nine killed during strike in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, May 16: At least nine persons were killed Saturday in the Kashmir Valley during a general strike called by Muslim militants condemning the arrest of a top militant leader, police said. Public services and transport closed to protest Thursday midnight arrest of Mustaq Ahmed Zargar and eight comrades of the Al-Umar Mujahideen, one of the top four guerrilla groups in Kashmir, reports AP.

Peace-keepers leave Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, May 16: A convoy of 200 United Nations peace-keepers left Sarajevo for Belgrade today because of worsening violence in the city between warring Serbs, Croats and Muslims. Shelling could be heard in the hills surrounding the besieged Bosnian capital, without water and electricity, as the convoy of 70 vehicles departed, reports Reuters.

Kurdish elections postponed for 48 hrs

ARBIL (Iraq), May 16: The Iraqi Kurdish elections scheduled for Sunday have been postponed for 48 hours because of a controversy over "indelible ink" imported from Germany, Kurdish officials announced today, reports AFP.

Azam restarted conspiracy '78, says Razzak

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League leader Abdur Razzak, MP said on Saturday that Golam Azam had started conspiring against the country's independence again since his return from Saudi Arabia in 1978.

He said that that conspiracy had reached its climax on Golam Azam's being elected Amcer of the Jamaat-e-Islami in December last year.

"Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are involved in this conspiracy," he said adding that "the present Pak President recently commented that the people of Bangladesh want to join Pakistan again."

Razzak was addressing a public rally in front of the National Press Club organised by Joy Bangla Sanskriti Oikyaote in support of Monday's hartal, withdrawal of false cases against the 24 'people's court' organisers, repeal of the Indemnity Ordinance and autonomy to radio and television.

Razzak said that war criminal Golam Azam was considered patriotic to this government and those who fought for the country's liberation were seditious.

He also said that the killers of 1971 and 1975 had flocked together and formed a joint command against the "Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Samanyee Committee."

The Awami leader urged the government to prove itself patriotic and pro-liberation as it claimed at public rallies by accepting the people's verdict on Golam Azam.

Presided over by Salauddin Badal the rally was also addressed by former Rajshahi University Vice-Chancellor Majharul Islam, Kazi Aref Ahmed, Gazul Huq, Syed Hassan Imam, Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya Bir Bikram and Panna Kaiser.

DU hall

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second year student of Sociology of the university.

A huge contingent of police searched some specific rooms of the hall in the early morning swoop but couldn't recover any arms and ammunition.

Protesting the arrest, the Chhatra League (M-I) brought out a procession in the TSC area in the evening.

It also held a rally at the TSC road island, which was addressed by Khizir Hayat Liza and Pankaj Devnath, President and General Secretary of the BCL university unit.

They demanded immediate release of Zakir and other Chhatra Leaguers arrested earlier.

They alleged the government was arresting one after another BCL activist to tarnish its image.

4 hurt as armed group storm dais of a rally

Four people, including a young girl student, were injured yesterday (Saturday) when an armed group stormed the dais of a rally, organised by the "Action Committee for Cancellation of the Medical Admission Test," in front of the Jatiya Press Club, reports UNB.

The committee members were holding the rally demanding cancellation of the test examination held April 10 in Dhaka for admission into first year MBBS course, alleging leakage of question papers.

EUCSU observes mourning day today

Engineering University Central Students Union (EUCSU) will observe mourning day today in memory of the students killed in a boat capsized in Buriganga Thursday, reports UNB.

Leasing out of Tinbigha a must: Basu

MEKHLIGUNJE (West Bengal), May 16: The West Bengal Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu today said that the leasing out of the Tinbigha corridor to Bangladesh "was a must and we are committed to implement it."

Addressing a left front rally at the High School ground here, 120 km from Siliguri, Basu said that the Left Front would not have agreed to implement the Indo-Bangla accord, if it at all would isolate the Kutchibari area, "as was being claimed by motivated political forces."

The Left Front had accepted the accord, he said, only after it was satisfied that the country's sovereignty and the interest of the people of the bordering areas, including Kutchibari, would not be jeopardised, following a detailed clarification provided by the Centre to the Front.

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Sick industries

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gin from the set date and continue on every alternative day in which an employer, an employee and a worker would take part on each occasion.

The Parishad said that although the Sick Industries Cell had identified 500 industries as genuinely sick, the documents of these industries were now lying frozen in the industries ministry without any action being taken. It said that different banks were taking action like filing cases against sick industries and putting them on auction defying the written directive of the Cell not to take any such measures.

The Parishad further said that some bank officials showed the sick industries as viable during the evaluation of the units while sanctioning loans for their personal interest. It said that action should also be taken against these officials.

The Parishad further said that out of about 56000 big, medium and small industrial units, about 26000 have either been closed or declared sick. These units have a total investment of Taka 3000 crore with about 2.5 lakh employees and workers, it said.

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Terrorists

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These terrorists get the supply of arms mainly from the Shantibahini men with whom they are in cahoots for collecting illegal tolls from the villagers, tea gardenmen, rubber garden officials and timber extractors, the SP said adding "we will now continue our operation against the terrorists."

Local sources said the alleged terrorists were backed by some well-off political leaders, businessmen and smugglers who during election period and in other occasions use them as mercenary to serve their interests.

A lawyer from Raosan upazila preferring anonymity said many village women were raped by those terrorists but the victims dared not take shelter of law fearing further persecution. Some of the terrorists have set up their hide-out at the hilly Radhamadapur and Brikkanamabpur villages of Haladia union under Raosan upazila, the lawyer added. He also informed that the Shantibahini men and terrorists in the nearby hilly jungles were getting their supply of essential commodities through some villagers from 'Fakir hat' a local bazaar. There is also allegation that sometimes the terrorists visit Chittagong town and stay with some city masters, political activists and other miscreants.

JS body to solve CHT problems demanded

By Staff Correspondent

Kalpa Ranjan Chakma, Member of Parliament from Khagrachari, yesterday demanded formation of a high-powered parliamentary committee to identify the reasons of the long-standing problems in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and find a political solution to them.

An Awami League MP, Chakma also demanded that the Jatiya Sangsad allow open discussions on the CHT incidents that have occurred since 1980.

Chakma in a statement issued last night thanked the Prime Minister for her recent visit to the CHT and her assurance for a political solution to the matters.

In his statement, Chakma demanded of the government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to start judicial probe into the Lougong killings and publish a white-paper on the issue immediately.

Regarding disputes over land in the Hill Tracts area, the AL MP demanded that steps be taken to repatriate the tribals who took refuge in the Indian state of Tripura and that the evicted tribals be rehabilitated in their own lands.

He urged the authorities to initiate measures to protect the cultural heritage of the tribal people of the country. He also demanded reconstitution of the National Committee on the CHT to include the MPs of the area.

Chakma in his 10-point charter of demand called upon the government to abolish the Zila Parishads in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

CPB against any linkage in resolving water sharing issue

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) Saturday expressed the hope that the forthcoming visit of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to New Delhi would help resolve the outstanding problems with India, reports BSS.

"We want that the government take initiative so that the outstanding problems are resolved," Safuddin Ahmed Manik, President, CPB told a press conference. He said problems between the two countries should be sorted out in the interest of the two peoples.

Manik said CPB was against any linkage in resolving Ganges water issue. "There cannot be any linkage of railway line or gas supply with the supply of water," he firmly stated those are separate issues and, therefore should be discussed independently, CPB leaders said.

The press conference was addressed, among others, by Nurul Islam Nahid, General Secretary of CPB, Shamsud-dhoha, leader of CPB parliamentary group, and Wazedul Islam Khan, Shekhar Datta, Mujahidul Islam Selim and Morshed Ali all central leaders, were present on the occasion.

The CPB announced a demand week from May 24 to put pressure on the government to bring down prices of essentials, curb terrorism, save industries from ruination, stop harassment to minority community, solve problems of Chittagong Hill Tracts, follow democratic norms and trial of Golam Azam.

Hartal tomorrow

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Political observers believe that both the rallies to be held on the eve of tomorrow's hartal would boost the demand of the organisers of People's Court.

In another development, Jatiya Jubo Command and Committee for Resistance to the Indian agents, reportedly backed by the Freedom Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh respectively have also called hartal the same day.

The city started witnessing rallies and processions demanding implementation of the verdict of the 'Gano Adalat' (people's court) and calling upon the people to make the hartal a success.

The Gano Adalat body, the National Coordination Committee for Realisation of the Spirit of the War of Independence and Resistance to the Killers and Collaborators of 1971 gave the hartal call from a huge public gathering in the city on April 26 when the one-month ultimatum it gave to the government for steps to try Golam Azam was over.

The Gano Adalat body, earlier, in a public trial held in presence of thousands of people in the city on March 26 categorically accused Golam Azam of actively collaborating with the Pakistani occupation Forces and resorting to killing, arson and rape in Bangladesh to suppress the country's War of Independence in 1971.

Golam Azam was also accused of conspiring against the existence of Bangladesh especially in the Arabian countries till his entering Bangladesh as a Pakistani national in 1978.

The trial body then gave a verdict that Golam Azam deserved the death sentence for crimes during and after the country's war of independence and demanded of the government to implement the verdict.

The ruling party during negotiations, with Opposition leaders in the last session of Parliament, in a bid to solve the issue, reportedly proposed that the government deport Golam Azam and withdraw the charges against the trial body. But the Opposition categorically demanded that the government try Golam Azam in a special tribunal formed under the law of the land.

Talking to this correspondent last week, Mohammad Nasim of the AL, Nurul Islam Nahid of the PDF, Raashed Khan Menon of the Five-Party combine and Suranjit Sen Gupta of the Ganotantri Party reiterated their respective demand for trial of Golam Azam under the International Crime Act, 1973 and said that they would not back out on the issue.

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3 killed in riot

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