

Fertiliser price has come down, claims minister

The price of fertiliser has come down substantially with adequate and steady supply of the important agricultural input throughout the country.

State Minister for Industries Lutfur Rahman Khan told BSS at his office yesterday that the alternate mechanism undertaken by the government involving the district and thana administration had paid rich dividends in curbing the "artificial scarcity" created by vested quarters.

Khan said a total of about 2.32 lakh tons of fertiliser had been distributed during the month of February and March through the alternate mechanism while 12.20 lakh tons of the item distributed through traders since July '94. He said the supply of fertiliser during the current peak season (January-March) was 6.10 lakh tons as against 5.58 lakh tons during the corresponding period last year.

Replying to a question on media reports of fertiliser crisis from different parts of the country, the state minister said it was "politically motivated to tarnish the image of the government on the one hand and destroy the agro-economy on the other."

In this context, he said, the consumption of fertiliser till March this year was 14.50 lakh tons against the total consumption of 15.84 lakh tons during 1993-94.

The state minister said the actual consumption of fertiliser in the country was 12.22 lakh tons against the projected de-

mand of 15.50 lakh tons during 1990-91 while the consumption was 15.58 lakh tons against the demand of 16 lakh tons during 1991-92. The consumption of the item was 15.05 lakh tons against the projected demand of 16.20 lakh tons during 1992-93, he stated.

In this context he dwelt at length on the background of privatisation of the fertiliser distribution system since 1989. He said prior to privatisation Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADCO) was responsible for the distribution through its countrywide network.

He said the price of fertiliser had been twice reduced and sold at Tk 3725 per ton against the previous price of Tk 4725 to ensure its delivery to the consumers at maximum retail price of Tk 230 per 50 kg bag.

Unfortunately, Khan said, some unscrupulous traders had created artificial scarcity in the markets compelling the government to intervene. The measures adopted by the government, he said, has proved very effective in restoring normalcy in distribution of the item. He said some transports of the army were also used to ensure quick disposal of fertilisers to the country's remotest corners.

The state minister was sharply critical of a section of political parties for what has been described as their design to use "fertiliser scarcity" to serve their political interests instead of extending the hand of cooperation to the government in handling the situation. He said they had given programmes like road blockade, gherao, hartals and siege for 18 days during the last three months to disrupt transportation and distribution process of fertilisers.

Khan held them also responsible for creating panic among the people by spreading rumours and instigating even plunder of the commodity in some places. He said all these actions have only multiplied the miseries of the people.

Asked whether the government's intervention for distribution of fertilisers was necessary, he said had the government not involved the district and thana administration, the situation would have further aggravated leaving the farmers at the mercy of some dishonest traders and vested quarters.

Miscechant kill sexagenarian

SATKHIRA, Apr 2: A sexagenarian farmer was hacked to death by some unidentified miscechant at his residence at Roypur village in Tala thana early this morning.

Remove bottlenecks

From Page 1 around 18 per cent, including gain tax, stamp duties and registration costs, were excessively high. REHAB proposed a reduction of this cost to around six per cent.

"We also feel that the above mentioned reduction will not make any significant loss to the government exchequer since the lower cost of registration will result in higher volume of sales," argued Arshi Haider, who is also managing director of Building Technology and Ideas Ltd.

He felt that the RAJUK procedures for approval of building plans is both inconsistent and inefficient. "The zoning laws and building construction codes for the metropolis need to be reevaluated and the approval procedure in RAJUK needs simplification," Haider said.

He also suggested streamlining the loan approval procedure of the House Building Finance Corporation. "The bureaucracy and loan approval procedure at HBFC is so cumbersome that it fails to play any effective role in financing our clients," he said.

The legal system also needs to be strengthened and mortgage foreclosure procedures simplified to attract banks and financial institutions in providing loans in the housing sector, he noted.

Among others present at the press conference were Pintoo Khan, managing director of City Development Company; Shamsul Alam, secretary general of the association and managing director of Abashon (Pvt) Ltd; Lt. Col (ret'd) Mahabuddin Ahmed, chairman of Property Development Ltd; Dr Toufiq M Siraj, managing director of Sheltech (Pvt) Ltd; A B A Sirajuddin, managing director of Confidence Builders, Nasrul Hamid, managing



Hillary Rodham Clinton welcomes Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at the reception hosted by the American Embassy in Dhaka yesterday to mark the visit of the US First Lady. —PID photo

US has much to learn : Hillary

From Page 1

President told the US First Lady that there is rule of law in the country and democratic institutions are functioning. The President also appreciated the role of the NGOs in supplementing government efforts to alleviate poverty and expand mass literacy.

Mrs Clinton, herself an accomplished lawyer, discussed the prospects for the profession in Bangladesh with the President. She said the United States is keenly observing the development of Bangladesh through the democratic process. She also said that she was interested to see quite a few rural development projects during her short trip with a view to getting fresh ideas to help the poorer section of the American society.

Hasina-Hillary

From Page 1 the US First Lady, also sent her greetings and good wishes to President Bill Clinton.

All leaders Abus Samad Azad, Tofael Ahmed, S A M S Kibria and Abul Hassan Chowdhury also attended the reception.

When contacted, S A M S Kibria said Hasina's discussion with Hillary seemed to have been very cordial.

Rajiv killing Jain Commission urged to summon Jayalalita

NEW DELHI, Apr 2: The Janata Party Chief, Dr Subramanian Swamy, has urged the Jain Commission to summon the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalita, to elicit information on whether she had foreknowledge about the plot to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi, reports PTI.

In an additional affidavit filed before the one-man panel, Dr Swamy has also called for the summoning of the former TNCC (I) President, K Ramamurthy, for his article on "the Rajiv murder and the Indian conspirators" in a Tamil weekly "Nakeeran", and the collector of Dharmapuri district of Tamil Nadu, Murugan.

DU admission

From Page 1 Khandoker Science Building, 13471-13770 at Science Library, 13771-13870 at Food and Nutrition Institute, 13871-14050 at Modern Language Institute, 14051-14550 at Dhaka University Central Library, 14551-15750 at Lalma-tia College, 15751-16980 at Science Annex Building, 16981-17480 at Sheikh Burhanuddin College, 17481-18680 at Begum Bodrunessa College and 18681-21319 at Curzon Hall area.

Rahman was present during the audience with the President.

Today, Mrs Clinton and members of her entourage have a busy schedule. They will leave early this morning for Moshahati, in Kaliganj thana of Jessore district, to see a Gramen Bank project.

She will also visit a non-formal school run by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) at Uttarpara of Churamanakhatia and a women's development programme of Banchee Shekha, an NGO, at Dogachia of the district.

She will also witness a joint exercise by contingents of the US and Bangladesh Air Force at the BAF Base in Jessore.

Hillary meets Hillary

KATHMANDU, Apr 2: US First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton today met Sir Edmund Hillary, the first man to climb the world's highest mountain the Everest located in Nepal.

"She is a charming lady. I enjoyed the meeting," Sir Edmund, a 75-year-old New Zealander, told Reuters.

The meeting dubbed a "Hillary meets-Hillary" encounter was Clinton's last engagement before she left the Himalayan kingdom for Bangladesh, the next leg of a South Asian tour that has already taken her to Pakistan and India.

Clinton returned from a jungle safari weekend in Nepal's foothill forests to meet the man who scaled the 8,848-metre (29,028 feet) Everest in 1953 with Nepal's Tenzing Norgay Sherpa.

June Hillary, the mountaineer's wife, presented Clinton with a book on *Sagarmata*, a local name for the Everest.

Her husband now runs a trust that does work to help the Sherpa community, the famed Himalayan porters and shepherds, in the district where the Everest is located.



A car was set on fire at Motijheel in the city yesterday. —Star photo

Shops, houses gutted in Barisal : 8 hurt

From Staff Correspondent BARISAL, Apr 2: At least 8 persons were injured and property worth about one crore taka was gutted in a devastating fire at Dhamura bazar under Uzpur thana of Barisal district around 3:30 pm this afternoon.

Police and witnesses said, the fire broke out when a gas cylinder exploded in a welding shop in Dhamura bazar this afternoon.

During the two-hour fire 27 shops in the bazar and 35 houses of adjoining areas were burnt down destroying property worth about one crore taka.

As there was no fire station near the bazar local people and police controlled the fire after 2 hour-long battle.

Injured 8 persons were admitted to Dhamura Health Complex in critical condition.

3 killed in road accidents

By DMCH Correspondent

Three persons were killed and another was injured in separate road accidents in and around the city yesterday.

A rickshaw-puller, Nadir Ali, 35, succumbed to his injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at around 3:10 am yesterday after being hit by a speedy truck in front of the Shishu Park near Shahbagh.

In another incident, one Shipul, 35, died on the spot when a truck ran over him near Savar on the Dhaka-Aricha highway in the morning.

Meanwhile, an automobile spares trader Amir Hossain, 38, succumbed to his injuries on way to the MDCH from Gazipur at about 11:00 am yesterday.

Witnesses said that Amir was seriously injured when a Sherpur-bound bus collided head-on with the scooter in which he was coming to Dhaka.

Anwar Hossain, 28, younger brother of Amir, was injured in the accident.

Bus service suspended

From Staff Correspondent BARISAL, Apr 2: For the second day today, road communications between the Barisal district headquarters and Kalapara remained suspended.

According to sources, some students of Amtali College yesterday stopped the movement of at least ten passenger buses of different routes, demanding separate bus services to different destinations from Amtali.

Azam

From Page 1 The processionists attacked the Jamaat office at Darga Patti in the town and beat up a local Jamaat leader, Shajahan Ali. They also set ablaze his motorbike. He was admitted to a local clinic with serious wounds.

Later, in the evening, BNP activists led by T R M Nurul Islam brought out another procession and paraded the main roads of the town chanting anti-Jamaat slogans.

Jamaat leader Shajahan Ali filed a case against five people with the local police.

Chhayanaut's appeal

By Staff Correspondent Chhayanaut, a cultural organisation, which greets the Bangla New Year every year by holding cultural programmes at the Ramna Batamul, yesterday in a press statement urged the authorities to take initiative against vendors and temporary stalls at the Ramna Batamul premises as these create chaos and confusion.

The statement signed by Prof Fazlul Halim Chowdhury, Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid, Prof Kabir Chowdhury, Prof Enajuddin Ahmed and others said that in the previous years, scattered stalls had disturbed the main cultural programmes.

Sylhet poura representatives sworn in

From Staff Correspondent SYLHET, Apr 2: The newly elected chairman and 21 commissioners of the Sylhet Pourashava took their oaths of offices today.

The Deputy Commissioner administered the oath at a function held at the Pourashava Auditorium this morning. The outgoing chairman A F M Kamal also spoke on the occasion.

The Midnight File

OIC concerned at renewal of UN sanctions against Libya

JEDDAH, Apr 2: The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) expressed deep concern Sunday at the renewal of UN sanctions against Libya and appealed to the Security Council to reconsider. A statement from the Jeddah-based, 52-member OIC said its secretary-general, Hamid al-Gabid "expressed deep concern in the face of this resolution, at a time when he was particularly hopeful" that the sanctions against Libya would be lifted or eased, "given the cooperation it has shown," reports AP.

58 Kurds killed in Turkish attack

ANKARA, Apr 2: Turkey stepped up its military offensive against Kurdish rebels in different fronts inside the country and in northern Iraq on Sunday, killing a total of 58 Turkish Kurdish rebels. Despite showing no immediate sign of easing the offensive, the government on Sunday launched a diplomatic campaign to counter mounting pressure from Western countries on Turkey to pull its troops from northern Iraq, reports AP.

'Private sector can rev up N-technology'

Speakers at a symposium in the city yesterday underscored the need for involvement of private sector for commercial application of nuclear technologies, reports BSS.

The symposium on the "role of nuclear technologies in development" was held at the National Science Museum premises on the occasion of central exhibition and competition of National Science and Technology Week that concludes tomorrow.

Former chairman of BAEC Dr M A Mannan presided over the symposium. BAEC member Dr M A Wazed Mia, professor of Islamic Institute of Technology (IIT), Gazipur Dr M Anwar Hossain and professor of Jahangirnagar University Dr M Maniruzzaman participated in the discussion.

BAEC chairman M A Quayyum said, BAEC encourages private sector involvement for commercial application of its research results, and had already set up a commercial irradiation plant at Chittagong for irradiation of medicine, medical equipment and exportable frozen foods with private collaboration.

He said the commission had adopted a long-term plan for best and optimum utilisation of its existing research establishments and manpower. He said the plan gives priority to its future research and development programmes to solve the problems, involved in different sectors of the national economy.

Dr Wazed Mia said, the government should take immediate decision on the much-talked about Rooppur nuclear power project. He said, Rooppur should be turned into a

Nurses' strike

From Page 1 student nurses said no initiative has so far been taken by the authorities for meeting their eight-point charter of demand.

Some 11,000 members of Bangladesh Diploma Nurses Association (BDNA) and 3,500 members of Bangladesh Student Nurses Union (BSNU) have been on strike since March 18 to realise their demands.

The nurses' demands include elimination of the posts of assistant nurses, granting selection grade to diploma nurses, accommodating nursing service in cadre service, converting Nursing Directorate into a department, steps to ensure that four more nursing colleges start functioning and jobs for the unemployed trained nurses.

The strike was enforced following a decision of the representatives' conference of nurses on March 10.

Power

From Page 1 ernment signed a MOU with another US company, the International Energy Group, for setting up two power plants with generation capacity of 300 MW each. But the company instead of finalising the agreement has extended the MOU for another one year.

A ministry source said they have received 37 offers from local and foreign companies interested in investing in the power sector, but so far, only Geopetrol International of Canada gave a concrete offer.

The company has given a performance guarantee to supply 210 MW power everyday. The tariff mentioned in their proposal is almost close to the tariff of the Power Development Board. The Geopetrol is expected to sign MOU on April 16.

A 13-member committee formed to look into the private power generation offers has scanned all the 37 offers, but approved only seven offers so far.

Shishu Park

From Page 1 the park are: Benkigo train, Wonder wheel, Merry go round, Battery car, New tramb, Roller skating, Flower-cup-ride, Chair tower, Air gun shooting, Trampoline, Baby cycle, Flying airplane and helicopter. All the items, except plane and copter were installed when the park was set up in 1979.