

SNAPS

LP gas crisis in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

An acute scarcity of LP gas prevails here for the last two weeks.

As a result, consumers suffer a lot. At present Bashundhara LP gas is being sold between Tk 500 to 600 while Clean Heat and Total Gaz are being sold between Tk 425 to 430.

Assistant general manager (AGM) of Bashundhara Gas Company Shad Tanvir told this correspondent that refilling of LP gas was suspended due to non-procurement of LP gas in time due to Middle East crisis.

30 hurt in B'baria clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

At least 30 persons were injured in a clash between two rival groups over installation of shallow tube-well (STW) in a paddy field at Rasulpur village in Sarail on Saturday.

According to police, eye witness and hospital sources, a farmer, Firuj Mia started installing a shallow tube-well for irrigation in his field. Another villager, Arab Ali obstructed him from sinking the tube-well due to land dispute. As a result there started an altercation between them.

Workshop on good governance

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A seven-day journalists' workshop on good governance began here yesterday.

It has been organised by the Mass-line Media Centre (MMC), a local NGO, with assistance from DANIDA, an international donor agency.

Twenty local journalists representing the national print and electronic media are attending the workshop, being held at the Family Planning Samitee (FPAB) auditorium in the town.

MMC chief RM Awrangzeb presided over the opening session where Patuakhali Press Club President Golam Kibria was chief guest.

Extortionists ruining shrimp industry

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Foreign exchange earning shrimp industry in Khulna and Bagerhat is being ruined by outlaws and ruling party activists for toll.

Many shrimp farm owners are thinking to wind up business due to sharp rise in incidents of bomb attack, death threat and poisoning of shrimps for refusing toll, said Chand Farazi, chairman of Lockpur Fish and Executive Committee member of Khulna Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Some have shifted their offices and families to Dhaka following death threats. A prominent shrimp exporter who has two processing factories in Khulna and Bagerhat has shifted his office to Dhaka, he told this correspondent on Sunday.

Sources in Khulna unit of Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters Association (BFEEA), talking to this correspondent also expressed grave concern over the onslaught on the shrimp industry. They declined to be named.

In the last two weeks, shrimps worth over Tk one crore 50 lakh in

16 farms were poisoned to death as their owners refused to pay toll, BFEEA sources said. But none of them filed any case with police fearing reprisal, they said.

A good number of farms have been forcibly occupied by the terrorists.

"We have been finished as shrimps worth several crores of taka have been destroyed. Death threats hang on us", said another owner seeking anonymity.

Shrimp traders are also not safe. Several incidents of looting of shrimps from vehicles took place in different areas of the two districts, said sources in the Shrimp Traders Association.

An attempt to kill shrimp exporter SM Amjad Hossain was foiled by his private security guards in the early hours of Friday.

According to police and locals, six armed miscreants in a white microbus went to his house at Lockpur village under Fakirhat upazilla at 3:30am.

They fled away when security guards opened fire, police said. Amjad Hossain, Managing Director of Lockpur Fish

Processing Ltd at Rupsha and Bagerhat Sea Foods at Fakirhat, was staying at a rest house at Paikpara in Bagerhat Sadar on that night.

According to Amjad Hossain, his shrimp farm at Fakirhat upazilla came under bomb attack at about midnight on June 6.

Amjad Hossain's younger brother, shrimp exporter SM Farhad Hossain, was gunned down by extremists on October 20 in 2001 at Kata Khali in Fakirhat. The case is now under trial in Khulna Speedy Trial Tribunal.

Wife of Slain Farhad is now facing threat for being complainant in her husband's murder.

"I also received several death threats for helping police to investigate the murder case", Amjad said.

Shrimp exporters of Khulna and Bagerhat have expressed deep concern at the incidents of bomb attack and threat during the ongoing peak season.

They said outlaws and ruling party activists sheltered by a section of corrupt police officials are involved in these incidents for refusing toll and protesting forcible

occupation of some enclosures, said an official of BFEEA.

Killing of shrimps by poisoning in different enclosures increased this year, he said seeking anonymity fearing reprisal from outlaws.

On June 8, nine alleged outlaws were caught while they were going away after pouring poison into water of four enclosures at Golapdah village under Dumuria upazilla. Shrimps worth over Tk 15 lakh were destroyed.

On the same day, shrimps worth over Tk 5 lakh were killed in the same manner in a farm at Lockpur village, owned by one Abul Hossain.

On June 7, poison was poured into a farm at Tapubing village in Jessore, killing shrimps worth over Tk 10 lakh.

Outlaws killed shrimps worth over Tk 20 lakh in seven enclosures at Jhilerdange village in Dumuria upazilla on June 1.

When asked, Khulna Police Superintendent Habibur Rahman said none of shrimp farm owners has filed any case.



PHOTO: STAR

Amazing maize promises good days for landless sharecropper Kamal Hossain and his family. The photo was taken during harvest at Kachia village in Bhola.

Maize magic in rural Bhola

'Landless' Khaleque earns Tk 50,000 in a season, many others become self-reliant

A CORRESPONDENT, Bhola

Maize cultivation has changed the life of a good number of landless families in three upazillas in Bhola.

This has been possible due to the technical support of the Agriculture Extension Department (AED) and the Agricultural Research Institute (ARI) in Barisal, maize farmer Abdul Khaleque of Kachia union in Bhola Sadar told this correspondent on Friday.

Abdul Khaleque, 45, earned about Tk 50,000 by cultivating maize on two acres of hired land this year.

He said they were first encouraged to cultivate maize by the AED Block Supervisor three years back.

In two seasons, about 30 destitute families of this area cultivated maize on 60 acres of land and earned good profits.

In the current season, the ARC at Rahmatpur in Barisal organised

a training on maize cultivation for 64 destitute families of Bhola.

The trainees included 24 families from Bhola Sadar, 24 from Borhanuddin and 16 from Lalmonohar upazillas. Both males and females took part in the training.

After training, they started maize cultivation in their respective areas.

"People had laughed at us initially", Abdul Khaleque said.

"But when we harvested bumper crops and earned profit more than that from rice and other crops, many of them showed interest to cultivate maize", said another landless farmer Alamgir.

Kamal Hossain, 30, is known as a successful maize farmer in the area. He has been growing the crop for the last four years. By this time, once landless and unemployed Kamal now owns two acres of land and built a new tin-shed house, all

with the profit from maize. Kamal said he is now happy and his three children are going to school.

Procurement of good seed is their main problem, they said. Khaleque said he collected seed from Dhaka as good quality seed is not available here.

They said many interested farmers could not cultivate maize due to nonavailability of the seed.

They have urged the local agriculture officials for supply of good seeds.

When contacted, Bhola AED Deputy Director Abdus Satter said maize cultivation has a bright prospect in Bhola if good seed can be supplied in time and marketing of the product can be ensured.

Seed trader Shajahan Ali during a training on maize cultivation told the farmers that he would try to ensure supply of good seeds and purchase the product.

'Supply gas or face agitation'

Greater Rangpur Development Forum tells Rangpur rally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

The Greater Rangpur Development Forum held a rally at the town Sunday afternoon to press its 12-point demand including gas supply and creation of Rangpur Division and Rangpur education board.

Several thousand people attended the rally, held at Faira Square with Mozaffar Hossain Chad in the chair.

The speakers threatened that tough programmes would be announced soon to realise the de-

mands.

They included Anwar Hossen Bablu, Advocate Firoz Kabir Gunjan, Hayat Mahmud and Asraf Hossen Kiron.

Hayat Mahmud alleged that the eight northern districts are deprived of development since 1990.

Gas supply could promote setting up of agro-based industries in the area.

Many small and medium industries in the districts have been closed down over the years because of an uneven competition from units in

other areas having gas supply.

Investors are not coming forward for setting up industries in the district only for lack of gas supply, he said.

The Jamuna Bridge had raised great hopes among people about industrialisation of the area. But their hopes have been shattered due to non-supply of gas, he said.

He said steps have been taken to supply gas to Bogra by 2006, ignoring Rangpur and other northern districts.

Anwar Hossen Bablu told the rally that their demand for

Rangpur division is justified to ensure balanced development of the eight northern districts but no government took any initiative to fulfill that.

Firoz Kabir claimed that BNP chief Khaleda Zia at a public meeting before the 2001 election had declared that Rangpur Education Board would be set up.

"But a conspiracy is now going on for setting up the proposed board in Dinajpur."

He said a tough agitation would be launched if that is done.

3 abductors get 14 years RI

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Netrakona District and Sessions Judge Court sentenced three kidnappers to 14 years rigorous imprisonment (RI) on Sunday.

The convicts are Liton, 20, Bacchu Mia, 42, and Haque Mia, 21, of Baroitaitor village in Barhatta upazila.

Each of them was also fined Tk 1,000, in default, to suffer six months' more imprisonment.

The culprits abducted Alpona.

Kishoreganj BCL

body formed after 11 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

A 101-member committee of Kishoreganj district unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) was formed, at last after 11 years.

Shahidul Islam was elected its president and Md Shariful Islam its

Coconut gardens vanishing in Kuakata sea beach

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The eye soothing coconut gardens in Kuakata sea beach are disappearing.

The gardens with 15,000 trees on 167 acres of land stretching eight kilometres in length along the beach were raised in 1960s, local peoples said.

The gardens, raised by some local NGOs with assistance from the then government, also served as good picnic spots. Several lakh taka were earned annually from sale of green coconuts.

Decay of trees was first noticed about five years back. Now the number of coconut trees would be hardly 10,000, local people and officials of Patuakhali Forest Department and NGOs told this correspondent during a recent visit to the area.

This correspondent saw hundreds of left over roots after the dead coconut trees were taken away by local people.

Trees are dying in large scale



PHOTO: STAR

BEAUTY VANISHING...Coconut gardens along the Kuakata seas beach are dying. Some of the numerous leftover roots of dead trees are seen in the picture.

now, they said. Heavy deposit of sand on the beach, carried by tidal

waves, could be the reason, they said.

Beaten to death for one taka Rickshawpullers observe half-day strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A rickshawpuller was allegedly beaten to death by two passengers in the town for only one take.

Protesting the incident, angry rickshawpullers observed a half-day strike in the town and staged demonstrations on Sunday.

Police said Rickshawpuller Habibur Rahman, 30, had taken two persons to Adalat Para from Launch Ghat Friday evening. He demanded Tk six as fare. The unidentified passengers gave him Tk five.

At one stage of an altercation over the fare, the two persons beat him severely and escaped leaving him there.

On information, Habib's wife took him to Patuakhali Sadar Hospital where he died



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Shikshak-Karmachari Oikya Parishad, a joint forum of teachers and employees, brought out a procession in Barisal city on Monday to press their 17-point demand.

AL LEADER MURDER CASE

Charge framed against 6

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Six persons were chargesheeted in Awami League (AL) leader Manzur Morshed Labu murder case.

They are Bomaru Akram, Jamal, Milon, Musa, Imam Shaikh and Swat. Imam and Swat are absconding.

Labu, former general secretary

of Sonadanga thana unit of AL was severely injured in a bomb attack on January 29 near Shaikhpara Power Development Board staff quarters. He died at Dhaka Medical college Hospital on January 31.

The chargesheet was submitted to Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) court on Saturday by sub-inspector (SI) Shiplu Shekhar of

5X3

6X3