

5 days of drizzle make essentials even more dear

MONJUR MAHMUD

Intermittent rains in the last few days have greatly affected the normal supply of essentials to different city markets, pushing their prices further up.

In some cases, the prices of essentials, including onions, green chilli and cucumbers, surged unusually as the rain has interrupted the supply.

Besides, the prices of vegetables have also risen by Tk 2-20 per kilogram.

The price of onion, which sold for Tk 28 a few days back, has risen to as high as Tk 40 per kg. The local variety of onion was available for Tk 38 while the Indian variety sold at Tk 36 at different city markets yesterday.

The price of chilli, normally ranging between Tk 20 and Tk 24 per kg, was selling at Tk 50, which is more than double the price of the previous week.

Cucumber sold yesterday at Tk 36 per kg at Karwan Bazar and New Market, although its price generally ranges between Tk 22 and Tk 32, depending on the quality.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Rain injunction on life

Fifth day's intermittent rainfall leads to waterlogging, rail link disorder with 15 districts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The spell of intermittent rain continued yesterday for the fifth consecutive day, paralysing normal life in the city and elsewhere in the country.

The rains riding on a low pressure sent many parts of the city heel to knee-deep water, stranded hundreds of vehicles and thousands of commuters on roads, cut off power and kept day workers out of their work.

The five days of rains added to the miseries of the city dwellers, already plagued by an acute gas crisis and power outages.

The rail link between the capital and 15 north and southwestern districts snapped after the track near Bhangura station in Pabna was submerged by rain water.

Because of the low hanging over the west central Bay of Bengal, clouds continued to churn out rain

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

The ongoing spell of intermittent rain has compounded sufferings of city commuters amid a continued lack of transports and passenger sheds. The photo was taken yesterday at Farm Gate.

Brokers scalp advance bus tickets for Eid

Capitalise on passengers' absence due to rains; transport staffs join in the fleecing

SURANJIT DEBNATH

Scalpers captured most of the advance tickets of inter-district buses for the eve of the Eid-ul-Fitr as people could not go to bus terminals in the capital due to daylong cold drizzle yesterday.

Taking advantage of the rough weather, brokers bought tickets, mainly of the front and middle row seats, of all private buses that already had started selling advance tickets. Tickets for November 1 to 4 are no longer available at the counters at Gabtoli, Kalabagan, Shyamoly, Kalyanpur, Mohakhali and Saidabad.

Passengers feared the scalpers will sell the tickets at three times the normal fare right before the Eid as the passengers will have no alternative to buying them.

Few advance bus tickets for October 25 to 31, mainly of the back

row seats, remain at the counters while sale of advance tickets of inter-district launches and trains start tomorrow.

"It is a great chance for us to grab the advance tickets as today (Sunday) people cannot come to bus terminals due to the rough weather," said a scalper on condition of anonymity.

"We get this chance only twice a year," he said, adding writing about it will have no effect.

People who could procure tickets had to pay much higher than the normal price. Some passengers alleged the scalpers had grabbed the advance tickets in collusion with some ticket counter staffs.

Contrary to the claim of most of the bus companies that they are not charging more than the government-set fare, a number of passengers told The Daily Star that transport workers

are charging Tk 100 to Tk 150 more per ticket.

According to the government rules, bus companies can charge Tk 0.80 a kilometre for buses and Tk 0.83 for minibuses. But the ticket counters are charging almost double the amount using Eid as an excuse.

"SR Travels, a company that runs on the Dhaka-Bogra route, charged Tk 250 for a ticket while the actual fare is Tk 152," Mohammad Rafiq, a government officer, told The Daily Star yesterday at Shyamoly bus terminal.

"I paid Tk 150 extra to Drutee Enterprise for a ticket to Barisal for October 31," said Ataur Rahman, a passenger at Gabtoli bus terminal yesterday.

Many scalpers were seen gathering near the ticket counters while this correspondent visited

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



COURTESY: TANWIR KHAN KAJOL

A rare species, Slaty Legged Crane, spotted by ornithologist Sharif Khan in Fakirhat in Bagerhat. Dr Reza Khan, curator of Dubai Zoo, who claims credit for first spotting the bird in Bangladesh, goes to Sharif.

Security beefed up in Sylhet after JMB threat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Security arrangements have been beefed up in the divisional headquarters and different upazilas of the district following a threat letter in the name of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) that the Sylhet deputy commissioner received on Friday afternoon.

Sylhet Superintendent of Police (SP) Anwaruddin Khan told The Daily Star yesterday that the deputy commissioner handed over the one page letter to him (SP) on Saturday.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

1.5 lakh tonnes of urea fertiliser to be imported

Purchase committee okays proposal

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The government yesterday approved a proposal for importing 1.5 lakh tonnes of urea fertiliser at a cost of about Tk 375 crore to meet the domestic demand.

The approval was given at a meeting of the Cabinet Purchase Committee chaired by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman.

Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) sent

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

INDIAN FOOD AID Blacklisted firm bags Rs 100cr supply deal JS body asks ministry to test quality of grains

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Food and Disaster Management has awarded to a 'black-listed' Indian company the contract to supply food grains worth of rupee 100 crore pledged by the Indian government in aid to Bangladesh.

The parliamentary standing committee on food and disaster management ministry yesterday disclosed the information and urged the ministry to test the quality of the grains so that the company cannot supply low-quality food, sources said.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

TENGRATILA BLOWOUT

Niko ends relief well, yet to declare it safe

SHARIEF KHAN

Canadian company Niko has completed drilling the relief well in the Tengratila gas field, but has refrained from announcing the completion as gas bubbles keep on gushing out in low pressure, accompanied by moderate flames at different places.

A competent source said that adviser to the energy ministry Mahmudur Rahman has asked Niko not to declare the job done before

Tengratila becomes safe for its inhabitants to return and lead a normal life.

"The infernos triggered by gas leakage has now subsided by 80 to 90 percent and gas is escaping out of the soil at zero pressure. These are signs that the relief well is doing its job. But it's not yet absolutely safe. We can't say exactly when the situation will be absolutely safe for the people," said a source close to Niko's operation.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Bush hails ban on Huji in Bangladesh

UNB, Dhaka

US President George W Bush has appreciated Bangladesh government's banning of Islamist group Harkat-ul-Jihad Al-Islami (Huji) by terming it 'a great decision.'

The president requested Bangladesh Ambassador to Washington Shamsheer M Chowdhury to convey his appreciation to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, foreign ministry said in a release yesterday.

In a brief discussion at the White House the ambassador apprised

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Clarification, our reply

Former state minister for energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain in a clarification against The Daily Star's October 14 report headlined "Dubious Leadership, graft led gas crisis; energy sector slow on development, quick on questionable dealings" has differed with the report on a number of its conclusions.

Mosharraf said it is not correct that he was ousted from the cabinet but that he resigned.

Regarding graft cases and conviction, he said, "I would like to categorically mention that there was no graft case against me. However, there were a few alleged cases on misuse of power which are sub judice now."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 7

Biman to get fuel until Eid on credit

Barisal flights cancelled

REAZ AHMAD

Liquidity-strapped Biman Bangladesh Airlines got a fresh lease on life yesterday as Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) agreed to sell it jet fuel on credit until Eid-ul-Fitr.

Biman, meanwhile, decided to cancel its loss-incurring domestic flights to and from Barisal, which carried only six passengers from Dhaka on the last occasion last

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7