

Diesel price goes up in northern districts

Balashi depot in Gaibandha empty: Barges stranded on rivers

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Price of diesel has increased in retail markets in northern districts due to alleged short supply, affecting irrigation of IRRI-Borolands.

Diesel is selling at Tk 35-37 a litre against Tk 32-35 a week back, according to retailers and farmers.

Fuel dealers in the region alleged short supply from oil depots at Chilmari in Kurigram, Balashi in Gaibandha and Baghabari in Sirajganj as four barges got stuck on the Brahmaputra and the Jamuna for some days due to less flow of the river.

Officials of Padma, Jamuna and Meghna oil companies at the depots said yesterday supplies to dealers are being maintained through railway tankers.

Our Rangpur Correspondent reports: The Chilmari floating depot of Jamuna Oil in Kurigram has run out of stock as the barge Taposh with four lakh litres of oil is stagnated on the Brahmaputra at Nakalia in Bera upazila in Pabna district, sources at the depots said.

The depot-in-charge, Abdul Majid, when contacted over phone

admitted that there been no supply as the barge is stranded on the Brahmaputra.

But he denied that there was shortage of diesel at dealers' level because all oil companies are maintaining supplies through alternative ways.

Majid said railway oil tankers with seven lakhs litres of diesel were brought to Rangpur from Chittagong and fuel is being supplied to depots in Chilmari and Balashi Ghat.

He said dealers are manipulating the prices after the news spread that oil-carrying barges were stranded on the Brahmaputra.

The Chilmari floating oil depot supplied fuel to dealers in Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent reports: Balashi floating oil depot is dry for about one month as no oil barge could reach it due to loss of navigability of the Brahmaputra in the region, its manager Motiur Rahman told this correspondent yesterday.

He said the last supply to dealers from the depot was made on December 22.

Three oil barges are now stranded at Patchkhola and Char Shaturia on the Jamuna river in Pabna for three days. It is uncertain when the barges will float again, he said.

However, manager of a filling station in Gaibandha town - Kadir and Son said, "We are collecting kerosene and diesel from Baghabari depot since the Balashi floating depot went dry about two months back".

Fuel dealers in Kurigram and Lalmonirhat are also lifting diesel from Baghabari depot now as the Balashi depot is dry, he claimed. This adds to their cost.

There may be crisis if supplies can not be maintained through railway tankers, said Shahajada Anwarul Kadir, President of Rajshahi Divisional Oil Distributors Association.

Our Nilphamari Correspondent reports: Fuel dealers in Nilphamari said about 80 per cent of diesel in the district is supplied from Baghabari oil depot and the rest 20 per cent from Parbatipur oil depot in Dinajpur.

Diesel is supplied by Padma, Meghna and Jamuna oil compa-

nies to Baghabari from Chittagong and Khulna, which is now seriously affected as the flows of Jamuna and Brahmaputra have reduced.

Bappy Bhounik, a dealer of Meghna and Jamuna oil companies said he got two lorries of diesel from Parbatipur on Wednesday though he wanted three lorries.

He also informed that high officials of Meghna and Jamuna oil companies informed him that due to navigability problem in the river Jamuna, they would bring additional fuel to Parbatipur through rail route.

The Sirajganj Correspondent reports: An official at Bhaghabari depot when contacted yesterday said fuel supply from the depot will stop 'within a short period' if the barges now stuck up on the river do not reach Bhaghabari Ghat.

Officials of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) said they are supplying fuel to northern districts by using railway tankers. Dealers will get fuel from Rajshahi, Parbatipur and Natore if supplies through river routes can not be maintained, they said. But this may not be sufficient, other sources said.



PHOTO: STAR
Rotten meat (left) detected at a posh restaurant during a joint drive yesterday by Barisal City Corporation, CAB and district administration against food adulteration and the persons arrested for the offence.

4 JMB suspects held in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Tangail police arrested four JMB (Ja'matul Mujahideen, Bangladesh) suspects from Delduar upazila in the district Tuesday night.

Acting on a tip-off, Detective Police raided some houses in Madarkol village in the upazila at around 9 pm and arrested Manjur Rahman, 18, son of Montaz Ali; Shohel Miah, 21, and Russel Miah, 14, sons of Khrishen Miah; and Abdul Kader, 14, son of Kalam Miah.

Police said the arrestees are activists of the banned Islamist organisation. They are being quizzed in police custody.

Anti-drug campaign

RU CORRESPONDENT

Residents in ward No 19 in Rajshahi City have formed a 51-member committee to eliminate drug use and peddling from the area.

The residents said, a section of drug peddlers are selling heroin, cannabis, phenisidyl, liquor in Chhotobongram, Asam Colony, Seroi colony, Utterpara and its adjoining areas on the nose of law enforcers. This resulted in an increase drug use, particularly by youths, and in anti-social activities.

Local people led by Ward Councillor Moniruzzaman Sharif held an anti-drug rally at the Eidgah Maidan on Monday.

Responding to the call, hundreds of people gathered there and expressed their resolve to eliminate drug use and peddling from the area.

After the meeting, the local people evicted drug peddlers from three dens in Chhotobongram area.

RCCI demands 4-lane highways in N-dists

Concern at death of 3437 in road accidents in country last year

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Expressing grave concern at loss of numerous lives in road accidents in northern districts, the Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) yesterday reiterated its demand for implementation of its suggestions put forward three years ago to reduce mishaps.

At least 3,437 people were killed in 2,122 road accidents in the country last year, most of them on highways in northern districts, RCCI President Mostafa Azad Choudhury Babu said at a view exchange meeting with journalists, held at the RCCI auditorium here.

He quoted from the annual report of Human Right Bureau to say that deaths from accidents are increasing every year.

Loss of so many lives in road accidents is only due to government's negligence in checking those and corruption in issuing fake driving licences, he said.

The RCCI president regretted that they put forward suggestions to the communication ministry three years back to control road accidents in northern districts but the government has not taken a step to implement those.

The proposals include construction of four-lane highways with road dividers, eviction of illegal structures and markets from roadsides, training for drivers at vocational institutes, steps against reckless driving and punishment for offenders.

The chamber leaders said that most of the road accidents in the

country occur due to narrow highways without concrete dividers.

There is no other alternative to building four-lane highways to avoid head-on collision of vehicles.

Mostafa Azad said, the number of accidents is more in the northern districts as most of the roads and highways there are narrow and have no dividers.

If there is fund constraint, the

30 fishermen buy freedom

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Thirty fishermen abducted by pirates two weeks ago in the Sundarbans were released yesterday on payment of Tk 3 lakh.

The fishermen were held hostage in Puspakati, Kalachak, Fatik Dune and Jalgata areas.

They were abducted in deep forest by two gangs of pirates, one led by Motaleb and the other by Sakawat.

Earlier, the pirates failed to realise Tk 15 lakh ransom from relatives of over 100 wood cutters they abducted from Arangkona, Baluchaki, Chora Meghna, Jalgata and Puspakati areas in the Sundarbans.

The pirates released Daud Dhal, Razzak, Nazrul Mizanur and Jalil of Burigoloin village in Shyamnagar upazila and Shahidul Gazi of Fatepur village in Paikgachha upazila in Khulna asking them to tell the abducted fishermen's relatives to pay ransom, otherwise the pirates threatened to kill them.

The victims informed the matter to local lawmaker Gazi Nazrul Islam and the police authorities.

The chamber leaders said that

Journalist Balu murder trial uncertain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The fate of Journalist Humayun Kabir Balu Murder Case has become uncertain due to framing of faulty charge and lack of clue for further investigation.

Inspector of Detective Branch (DB) of police Abdul Hamid who is the Investigation Officer (IO) of the case, framed charges against eight outlaws on June 28 last year.

The trial began at Khulna Speedy Trial Tribunal on October 25 last year. Afterwards, statements of 11 Prosecution Witnesses (PWs) were recorded. But their statements did not confirm punishment of any accused.

This is because of improper investigation and framing of faulty charge, said Public Prosecutor (PP)

Advocate Abu Zafar.

Meanwhile, Tribunal judge Abdus Samad ordered an investigation into the case on January 4 after a prayer made by Public Prosecutor (PP) Advocate Abu Zafar.

When contacted, Investigation Officer (IO) Hamid said, "I have no clue for further investigation."

The case docket of the murder is also yet to reach the IO from Khulna Speedy Trial Tribunal for further investigation.

Two out of eight charge sheeted accused, Shobir and his younger brother Shumon of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajuddho) died in encounters with members of Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) in October and December last year.

8x3

12x3



PHOTO: STAR
Leaders of left parties greet the audience at a memorial meeting held at Banki High School ground in Jessore on Monday in observance of third death anniversary of Amol Sen.