

# Road barricades in Khulna, Satkhira for power, fertiliser

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Farmers and political parties yesterday barricaded the Khulna-Satkhira and Satkhira-Kaliganj roads for adequate supply of power, diesel and fertiliser for IRRI-Boro crops.

Irrigation of croplands in the two districts are being affected due to short supply of the agri-inputs.

Our Staff Correspondent in Khulna reports: Over 3000 farmers barricaded about seen kilometres of the Khulna-Satkhira road from Atharomile to Chuknagar for over four hours from 10 in the morning demanding power, diesel and fertiliser.

This was the longest road barricade in the district in recent times, which created long snarl-ups of vehicles on both sides.

Angry farmers chanted slogans against the government and the Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker from the area and threatened of tougher action if adequate supply of the agri-inputs is not made within 48 hours.

The barricade was withdrawn after the Jamaat lawmaker went to the spot and assured farmers of supplying agri-inputs.

Our Satkhira Correspondent reports: Demonstrations for power, diesel and fertiliser has become a regular phenomenon in the district with at least one such event taking place in any area. This has been going on for about 15 days since the power crisis deepened in the peak season of IRRI-Boro cultivation.

Yesterday, activists of Workers Party and its peasant front Khetmojur Samity, joined by farmers, marched streets in Satkhira town and staged a sit-in in front of the Deputy Commissioner's office.

The parties also barricaded the Satkhira-Kaliganj road for about an hour at noon and held a briefly rally.

Satkhira is getting only 4 to 5 megawatt of power against the need for 33 megawatt a day, sources said.

Frequent power outage and voltage fluctuation are seriously affecting production in mills and factories, shrimp processing units



PHOTO: STAR

Activists of Workers Party and Khetmojur Samity staging a sit-in in front of Satkhira Deputy Commissioner's office yesterday demanding adequate supply of power, diesel and fertiliser.

and IRRI-Boro cultivation.

PDB sources said, it gets only 4 to 5 mw power, out of which it gives 2 mw to Rural Electrification Board (REB) for supply to rural areas.

Talking to this correspondent some factory owners and business leaders said they face load shedding of about 8 hours a day since beginning of summer.

Satkhira Chamber of Commerce and Industries President Sheikh Azhar Hossain said frequent load shedding and voltage fluctuation are damaging machinery in 39 fish processing plants, three cold storages and over 49 ice factories.

"Satkhira is the largest shrimp exporting area in the country earning a huge amount of foreign exchange every year. Shrimp export will be hampered this year as production in processing plants are interrupted due to frequent load shedding", he added.

President of Bangladesh Shrimp Cultivators Association, Dr. Aftabuzzaman, a former minister, said shrimp get rotten due to load shedding, incurring heavy losses to owners.

Director of Satkhira Ice and Cold Storage Ltd, Atiar Rahman said, cold storages now keep generators stand-by as PDB can not ensure smooth supply of electricity. This doubles the cost of preserving potato.

Explaining, he said one barrel of diesel is needed to keep a cold storage running for six hours with the help of a generator. This costs about Tk 6000 against Tk 3500 for electricity supplied by PDB.

Sundarban Textile Mills CBA President Abdullah Sardar said, the mill is incurring a loss of about Tk 75,000 a day as production is interrupted due to frequent load shedding.

A PDB official said, peak hour (5pm to 11pm) demand for electricity in the district is 18 mw but only one fifth of it is supplied from the National Grid.

"We have no alternative to load shedding", he said, adding power is distributed by the central load dispatch center and nothing can be done locally.

Besides load shedding, power supply is interrupted at times due to rehabilitation of distribution lines at places.

The power crisis is more in rural areas under Palli Bidyut Samity (REB), which gets only 2 megawatts against a demand for 15 megawatts during the on-going irrigation season, sources said.

## Farmers besiege Barind project office in Thakurgaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Farmers yesterday laid a siege to the Barind Multipurpose Project office at Haripur upazila in Thakurgaon district demanding water supply, now stopped due to lack of electricity.

Sources at the project office, when contacted, said on condition of anonymity that they could not supply water due to lack of power since Saturday last.

Yesterday, about 200 farmers marched to the project office and laid a siege to it in the morning.

Project officials left the office seeing the procession, sources said.

On information, Haripur UNO Shakhawat Hossain rushed at the spot and cooled down the agitating farmers.

The farmers told the UNO that their IRRI-Boro lands are being affected due to lack water but the project authorities did not supply water despite repeated requests. The UNO assured them of immediate steps to resume water supply to their lands from the project.

## PCJSS council begins today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A triennial council of Parbatya Chattagram Jano Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) will begin here today, said a press release.

PCJSS chief Jyotirindriya Bodhipriya Lama alias Santu Lama is due to inaugurate the three-day council at 10 in the morning.

PCJSS councilors and thana level leaders from three hill districts will attend the council while leaders of its 'front organisations will be present as 'observers'.

The council will discuss PCJSS organisational matters and the political situation in the country, PCJSS Information and Publicity Secretary Mongol Kumar Chakma said yesterday.

On the concluding day, a new committee of the party will be declared for three years, he added.



PHOTO: STAR

The BSD long march protesting India's move for river-linking entering Kurigram town yesterday.

## BSD LONG MARCH ENDS IN KURIGRAM

# 'Resist India's move for river-linking'

RAFIQ SARKER, back from Kurigram

RANGPUR: The 'long march' organised by Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) protesting India's river inter-linking project ended in Kurigram yesterday with a big rally held in the local stadium.

The long march was started from Muktangan in Dhaka on February 25.

Yesterday's rally was addressed by among others, the party's central leaders Khalequzzaman, Sudhangsu Chakraborti, Mobinul Haider Chowdhury, Abdullah Sarker, Bazlur Rashid Firoz and Razekuzzaman Ratan.

Kurigram BSD Co-coordinator Zahedul Hoque Milu was in the chair.

The long march was organised also to press some demands including government steps to ensure adequate supply of power, fuel and fertiliser to farmers for IRRI-Boro cultivation and containing price spiral of essentials and crimes.

Khalequzzaman criticis the government for what he called its 'weak foreign policy' that inspired

India to take up its massive river inter-linking project violating international laws.

He said, the entire river systems in Bangladesh will be affected and start drying up if India implements its project to withdraw and divert flows of international rivers in the upstream.

Bangladesh is already experiencing the aftermath of withdrawal of Padma waters through Farakka barrage. India is also constructing another barrage in the upstream of Surma and Kushiara rivers in Sylhet. This will dry up the Meghna river. The BSD leaders urged the government to raise the issue in international forums to create world opinion in favour of Bangladesh.

They also called upon all political parties to organise massive protests in the country against the Indian move.

On way from Rangpur to Kurigram, the marchers also held several wayside rallies at Kounia, Fakirertakea, Borobari, and Kathalbari.

Speakers at the rallies criticised the government for its failure to ensure adequate supply of fertiliser, fuel and power to farmers during the current IRRI-Boro season and contain price spiral of essentials and corruption.



PHOTO: STAR

Explosives recovered from fields in Noimile area in Shajahanpur upazila in Bogra district yesterday.

## Explosives recovered in Bogra

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Police yesterday recovered huge quantities of explosives from two fields in Noimile under Shajahanpur upazila in Bogra.

Being informed, a police team led by acting OC of Shajahanpur thana Ahsanullah recovered 550 grams of aluminium nitrate and 300 grams of puric powder contained in two plastic pots and 25 hand circuits from a maize field in the village in the morning.

In the afternoon, the police team recovered 700 grams of ammonium nitrate, 300 grams of aluminium nitrate and 4.5 kilograms of lead nitrate from a nearby beans field in the area.

Landowners Ansar Ali and Afazuddin were taken to the police station and released after interrogation. A case has been filed police said.

## Manikganj Bar polls held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Awami League backed candidates bagged eight posts including that of president of Manikganj Bar Association in the polls held on Tuesday.

BNP backed candidates got seven posts including those of vice-president and general secretary.

Abdur Rashid and Aziz Ullah have been elected president and general secretary respectively, bar association sources said.

# BNP office being set up on AL leader's land in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A move to construct BNP office on the land of a senior Awami League (AL) leader dismayed locals and sparked protest from his family members and party leaders.

The land selected for setting up BNP upazila office belongs to Barisal district AL secretary and former whip of Jatiya Sangsad Abul Hasanat Abdullah. BNP men dumped construction materials at the site on Barisal-Dhaka Highway near Gournadi bus stand and started work on Monday.

Family members and party leaders claimed that the land is the paternal property of Hasanat.

Barisal district AL office secretary and Bar Association president Advocate Talukdar Muhammad Yunus told this correspondent that Hasanat's father late Abdur Rob Serniabat, the then minister purchased the land from Krishnakanta, Shamayal, Vasharam and Shangkar in 1975.

After the changeover of government and the tragic incident in 1975, Hasanat's family members left the country. The then government took

possession of the land declaring it a vested property. However, the land was returned to Serniabat's successor Hasanat in 2001.

But, Gournadi Pourasabha BNP president Hannan Sharif claimed that 25 decimals of land on the plot is owned by the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) as per to the Land Revenue Department's official records.

He said, the site for the upazila BNP office was selected following submission of a prayer to the authorities concerned for lease of the land.

Gournadi upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) Mahfuzur Rahman Saturday said he ordered stoppage of the work. He said he had visited the 'disputed' land after receiving an objection from Hasanat's family members.

"If Hasanat's family members can show necessary documents and prove ownership then nobody can construct any structure on the land without his consent and permission", he said.

Despite his assurance the construction work began just two days later, on Monday.

Locals said the land was handed over to Serniabat's family on condition of using it for social welfare, not for 'personal' gains.

Even if the RHD owned the land then how can a party be allowed to use it for political purpose, they questioned.



PHOTO: STAR

Bricks and sand for building an office of ruling BNP on the land owned by Awami League leader Abul Hasnat Abdullah in Gournadi in Barisal.