

North faces 3cr litres of diesel shortage this Boro season

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

Sixteen northern districts are likely to face a diesel shortage of three crore litres in the current Boro season, according to a Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) report.

Sources in BPC's Northern Regional Control Room (NRCM) in Bogra said the corporation is going to set up a temporary distributing point at Kazirhat area in Pabna to ensure smooth distribution of diesel during the Boro season in North Bengal.

A Senior Official of BPC in Bogra told The Daily Star that approximately 41,51,00,000 litres of diesel will be needed for smooth running of 5,50,100 irrigation equipment during the Boro season.

An NRCM official apprehended that smooth supply of fuel, especially of diesel, to Baghabari river port will be severely hampered in February due to a drop in the water level of the Baghabari river and for rise of shoals in a 25km stretch of the river from Baghabari to Kazirhat.

The diesel shortage occurred

due to the drop in water level of the river, which is making it difficult for fuel tankers to navigate towards the port, according to BPC officials.

Based on a previous record of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) some sources of the agency apprehend that the water level on the river route is likely to drop further in February. Last year cargo vessels, especially fuel tankers, could not ply the route due to low water level in the river.

BIWTA officials further

Gang leader killed in Rab 'shootout'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A top cadre of the notorious gang Lalchad Bahini was killed in a 'shootout' between Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and his cohorts in Daulatpur upazila of the district early yesterday.

The dead was identified as Rokibul Hossain of Sirajnagar village of the same upazila.

According to Rab-12, they arrested him at his house on Tuesday morning. During interrogation at Rab Kushtia office, he confessed to be a member of the gang and to have firearms hidden at different locations in his village.

Following his confessional statement, a Rab team took him to Sirajnagar village to recover the arms. As soon as they reached near an orchard in the village, Rokibul's accomplices opened fire on them.

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Muggers shoot man, loot Tk 3 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of snatchers mugged Tk three lakh from a rickshaw passenger after spraying bullets in the capital yesterday.

The incident occurred at around 11:30 am at Uttara sector 3 road no. 18 when the muggers attacked Mohamamd Shohag, 20, a cellphone company staff, who was returning to his office by a rickshaw withdrawing Tk three lakh from Islami Bank.

The assailants sprayed bullets that hit Shohag's left leg as he was trying to flee away after the extortionists stopped his rickshaw to snatch away the amount.

The snatchers then left the spot in a motorbike taking the money. Locals later admitted Shohag at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

A case was lodged with Uttara police station in this connection.

All ECs asked to resign

Citizens campaign for judicial council if they do not quit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shushashoner Janney Nagarik (Shujan) yesterday said all commissioners of the Election Commission (EC), including the chief election commissioner, should resign for the interest of a fair election acceptable to all.

In a statement, Shujan Executive Committee members also demanded that the chief adviser to the caretaker government request the president to form a supreme judicial council to remove all the election commissioners if they do not resign.

The statement said the commissioners should be removed as they failed to prepare a correct voter list, implement the High Court order fully, and wasted over Tk 150 crore of public money in the name of preparing the voter list.

Shujan Executive Committee members Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, Justice Kazi Ebadul Haque, M

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3 die after falling from train roof

UNB, Moulvibazar

Three train passengers were killed and two others injured critically as they fell from the roof of a moving train at Kulaura station here on Tuesday night.

The identity of the dead and injured could not be known.

Railway sources said the accident occurred at about 9:00pm when five passengers travelling on the roof of Sylhet-bound Jayantika Express from Dhaka fell when they slammed into the overhead bridge at the station. Three of them died on the spot.

The injured passengers were admitted to Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital.

GS, 5 other top BCL leaders held in city

101 arrested countrywide as army continues drive

STAR REPORT

The army yesterday arrested six top leaders of Awami League's (AL) student wing Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) including its General Secretary (GS) Mofazzal Haider Chowdhury Roton in the capital.

Security personnel also arrested Narsingdi town BNP General Secretary Harunur Rashid and his three brothers, who are also leaders of Jubo Dal and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), during yesterday's countrywide anti-crime drive.

The law enforcers also recov-

ered an unlicensed revolver and ammunition from their possession.

At least 101 persons were arrested in 13 districts during yesterday's drive.

Among yesterday's arrestees are also a number of district and upazila-level top political leaders and ward commissioners, most of whom have involvement with BNP politics.

During the operations carried out by the army, police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) some other leaders and activists of AL and its

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PHOTO: STAR

A tilted over loaded truck lies on the road for several hours, causing serious traffic jam near Rampura Bridge in the capital yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Army men busy in rescue work at Block-C of Section-6 at Mirpur in Dhaka as a blaze destroyed around 30 houses yesterday.

India wants credible polls in Bangladesh

Says new envoy after meeting with Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newly appointed Indian High Commissioner to Dhaka Pinak Ranjan Chakraborty yesterday said his country wants a free, fair and credible election in Bangladesh with participation of all political parties.

"We hope a fair and credible election will be held here with the necessary updating of the voter list," Chakraborty told journalists after paying a courtesy call on Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence.

"What is happening in Bangladesh is absolutely her internal matter. However, we are observing and keeping our government updated on Bangladesh's current political developments," he added.

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15 die as car bomb rocks Baghdad

AFP, Baghdad

Bombers targeted Baghdad's volatile Shia district of Sadr City yesterday, killing 15 people a day after dozens of students and teachers were slaughtered in twin bombings outside a university.

A car bomb ripped through a crowded marketplace in Sadr City, a politically sensitive but impoverished district of Shia zealots, leaving at least 15 people dead and 33 wounded, a security official said.

The district is a regular target for Sunni extremists in the bitter sectarian conflict rocking the Iraqi capital. Iraq's biggest bomb attack was also in Sadr City -- which has thousands of young followers of radical Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr -- last November in which 202 people died.

Wednesday's attack came a day after 70 people were killed and 138 wounded in a double bombing outside the renowned Mustansiriya University which lies near Sadr City.

Shocked and angry students Wednesday staged a protest in the central Karada district against the university bombing and demanded more protection for students and professors.

Some held banners protesting the deadliest violent attack in the war-torn country this year, while others shouted slogans demanding that universities be protected.

Police sealed off the Mustansiriya university campus as the education ministry ordered three days of mourning and told its institutions to conduct prayers for the victims.

Dozens of Iraqis were seen donating blood for the victims of the attack.

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki warned of stern action against criminals and "death squads."

"We will clean Baghdad from terrorists and outlaws," he said in a meeting with foreign ambassadors based in Baghdad.

"There will be no safe haven for anyone in Baghdad and we will rigorously pursue terrorists and death squads."

Many in the violence-wracked capital had been expecting a major attack in the wake of the December 30 botched execution of Saddam Hussein, who was taunted by a guard, allegedly a Shia, in his final moments.

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TEXTBOOK ERRORS

Board defends publishers

JU CORRESPONDENT

Instead of taking actions, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) yesterday defended the publishers for errors and anomalies in the textbooks for classes IX and X saying these are 'nothing but human errors.'

"Such mistakes could happen during the printing and binding works as the publishing houses have to print a large number of books," NCTB Chairman Prof Dr Gazi Md Ahsanul Kabir said in a reaction to a report carried in The Daily Star yesterday.

The chairman claimed he did not find such errors mentioned in the report after scrutinising some of the books.

He gave example of a book published by the Oxford Publishing Company that also contains such faults.

Regarding a disorganised chapter on incurable diseases in General Science textbook, which suddenly breaks at page 17 and starts at page 257, the chairman said, "The sudden break took place as we received the additional part of the chapter much later."

Meanwhile, sources said many teachers, especially outside the capital, do not believe that there could be any error in the NCTB textbooks.

Rather they try to establish the wrong or misleading information when students find out and place the issues before them.

"How could there be an error in

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Israel military chief resigns over Lebanon war probe

REUTERS, Jerusalem

The chief of Israel's armed forces has tendered his resignation after internal probes pointed to his responsibility for the setbacks of last year's Lebanon war, a military spokeswoman said on Wednesday.

She said Lieutenant-General Dan Halutz, 58, told Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Defence Minister Amir Peretz that he was quitting "as the investigations have run their course."

"With the echoes of battle having faded, I have decided to act on my responsibility," the spokeswoman quoted Halutz as saying in his resignation letter.

The July-August assault on Lebanese Hezbollah guerrillas drove them from Israel's northern border but failed to retrieve two captive soldiers, prompting many Israelis to call for a purge of the top brass in hope of restoring a military edge.

A retired Israeli general, Dan Shomron, recently handed in the findings of a probe he conducted into the war's execution.

Shomron's report, released in part last month, criticised Israeli

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Prayer Timing		
January 18		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-40	5-44
Esha	7-00	7-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Nepali Maoists start handing arms to UN

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's once feared Maoist forces began putting their weapons under United Nations supervision yesterday, a key part of a peace deal in the Himalayan country, a Maoist leader said.

"(The) UN and our team has begun the verification process of our People's Liberation Army and their weapons," said Samthing Buddha, a Maoist division commander from Chitwan, where registration began Wednesday at midday.

Arms were being handed over for UN inspection and recording and then each Maoist cadre placed his weapon in a container in a UN enclosure, an official from the world body said.

"It is not surrender of weapons -- it's the Maoists storing the weapons in UN containers," a UN official said.

The Maoists at the camp some 200 kilometres (120 miles) southwest of the capital Kathmandu did not allow the media to observe the handover.

"The process has been going

ahead in an orderly fashion. It has gone very well today (Wednesday) and we expect another (Maoist) division to start the process in another cantonment site tomorrow," said the official.

The total number of soldiers and weapons registered would not be revealed until the end of the process, the official said.

During this first phase of registration, 1,000 of the 6,500 Maoist soldiers in the camp were to have their weapons verified, said Maoist commander Buddha.

As part of the peace deal that saw Maoist MPs sworn in earlier this week, the rebels will keep a key to the locked-up weapons.

One hundred and eleven ex-Gurkhas will be monitoring the 28 camps in seven different areas before the full UN contingent arrives.

The rebels claim to have 35,000 soldiers in their "People's Liberation Army," but independent estimates put their numbers at closer to 12,000.

Apart from those needed to protect Maoist camps and leaders,

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