



Farmers wait in a long queue at a dealer's shop at Shahebganj in Raiganj upazila in Sirajganj district for urea while a huge quantity of the fertiliser is stored at Baghabari river port in Shahjadpur. The photos were taken on Thursday.



PHOTO: STAR

# Power, fertiliser crises hit IRRI-Boro in 16 N dists

## REB supplies about 20 MW against 150 MW needed

**RAFIQUE SARKER** in Rangpur and **GOLAM MOSTAFA** in Sirajganj

Power and fertiliser crises at the onset of IRRI-Boro season have worried farmers in 16 northern districts.

Rural Electrification Board (REB), mainly responsible for keeping irrigation pumps operative, supplies less than one eighth power needed. To operate irrigation machines, farmers move from place to place for diesel; and wait in long queues at dealers' shops for urea, but often return home disappointed.

Crops will be affected if fields can not be irrigated properly and urea applied to newly transplanted IRRI-Boro seedlings, farmers said. Power outage continues up to 16 hours a day in certain areas, they said.

REB sources said non-operation of 3 out of 5 units at Ashuganj power station and all units at Haripur station is the main reason for power shortage to the National Grid. REB gets power from the National Grid.

In last four days, REB could supply hardly 20 MW electricity a

day in greater Rangpur and Dinajpur districts against a demand for about 150 MW.

AREB official seeking anonymity said the situation would turn more serious soon when the demand for electricity will increase in rural areas for irrigation.

General Manager of Rangpur Polli Biddiyut Samitee -2, Dewan Mohammad Tofazzal Hoasain said, the unit got about 1 MW electricity on Wednesday while its demand was for 8 MW.

The situation will not improve till power supply from the National Grid is increased, which is unexpected now, he added.

Farmets at Baderganj upazila in Rangpur said, their irrigation pumps are inoperative for about a week due to lack of electricity.

According to Rangpur regional office of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), 3, 40,319 hectares of land were brought under IRRI-Boro cultivation this year in 8 districts under greater Rangpur and Dinajpur.

DAE Additional Director Zakir Hosain said, about 60 per cent of

the lands are to be irrigated by power-run pumps. The yield will be affected if power crisis continues, he added.

Farmer Uday Chandra Barmon in Lahirirhat said, he planned to cultivate BR-28 on six acres but could not prepare those as his irrigation pump is inoperative for lack of power.

These correspondents talked to a number of farmers in the region, who expressed great concern due to power crisis.

Meanwhile, Rangpur Agricultural Forum, a pressure group of farmers in the region, urged the government for smooth supply of power in rural areas for the sake of IRRI-Boro crops.

The fertiliser crisis, created mainly by a section of dishonest dealers in collusion with some unscrupulous officials, is yet to be eased despite army intervention on January 15 to streamline urea supply to government- appointed dealers from Baghabari river port, a main conduit where the fertiliser has been stockpiled.

The dealers have created an artificially crisis by stocking those at Baghabari port and increased the

price.

A bag of urea is sold at between Tk 350 and Tk 450 in rural areas in northern districts against the official price of Tk 290, farmers said. They said they often return home disappointed after standing in long queues in front of fertiliser dealers' shops.

These correspondents yesterday visited Baghabari river port and saw a huge quantity of urea bags piled up there as dealers did not transport those to their stores.

Allegations of adulteration of urea with other chemicals were also made by certain quarters. They said a big trader at Baghabari has engaged about 100 labourers who open urea bags, adulterate the and fertiliser and sew the bags again.

When contacted, sources in Sirajganj district administration said they have taken steps hopes the artificial fertiliser crisis will end soon. At least 158 dealers are now distributing fertilisers among farmers in presence of army in nine upazilas of the district as per lists prepared by agriculture officials, they said.

# 3 held in Rangpur for hoarding diesel

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangur**

An army team on Thursday arrested three persons from different areas of Baderganj for hoarding diesel and recovered 24075 liters of fuel from their depots.

The three arrested persons--Khabir Uddin, Babu Kamal, and

Ashrafal Hoque--were handed over to Baderganj police.

Police lodged a case against them and sent them to jail.

Police said the three were not authorised to sell or stock diesel.

Sources in the district administration said crackdown on diesel hoarders and fake dealers will continue.

# Arrest black money holders, urges LDP leader

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona**

LDP presidium member MA Karim Abbasi Thursday night urged the caretaker government to arrest the black money holders who looted crores of taka in name of different projects.

The LDP leader said this while addressing a press conference at his Durgapur upazila town residence.

He said many BNP newcomers who joined the party deserting Jatiya Party looted a huge amount of money in name of various projects in the Bangladesh Water Development Board, Roads and Highways Department and Local Government Engineering Department.

Not only that, but the looters earned money illegally by giving appointment in different posts of police department in the fog end of BNP rule, he said.

'I opposed the looters but failed to refrain them from their corrupt practices due to interference of former state minister for home,' he said. 'Many of the looters are close relatives of the minister', he said. 'They also earned money by giving threats to officers of various departments,' he claimed.

Abbasi demanded of the government to inquire into the project

activities of various departments including LGED, Roads and Highways, BWDB and that of recruitment in police department.

He urged the government to create an atmosphere for holding a free and fair election as early as possible by preparing the voter ID cards, correcting the voter list and re-constituting the Election Commission (EC).

Netrakona district LDP joint convenors Advocate Abdul Hannan Ranjan, Advocate Ekhlashuddin and Nayan Datta including local party leaders were present at the conference.

The LDP leader further said the new comers after being patronised by the former state minister for home illegally captured the BNP leadership in the district only to become rich quickly by earning lakhs of taka through illegal means.

An immediate investigation into their corrupt practices should be made so that public can know how much money of the tax payers they had looted during the last BNP rule, he said.

If their previous wealth statement can be made public, then and only then it will be easier for people to know what amount of public money they had plundered during the period, he said.

## 'ABNORMAL' FALL IN KAPTAL LAKE WATER LEVEL

# Power generation dips to 40 MW, waterway links disrupted

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati**

Power generation in Kaptai Hydroelectric Power Project (KHPP), the country's lone hydro-electric plant has come down to 40 Megawatts (MW) from usual 230mw as water level of Kaptai Lake has fallen abnormally, which is 'unusual' at this time of the year.

Besides increasing menacing power outage, the fall in water level is also hindering movement of vessels in picturesque Kaptai lake, a major tourist spot. Waterway links, the main means of communication in the district, has also been greatly affected in six out of ten upazilas of the district. People of Baghaichhari, Longudud, Barkal, Jurachhari, Bilaichhari and Naniachar upazilas

fully depend on waterways for links with the district headquarters.

KHPP sources said, only one power generation unit (Unit no-2) out of five is producing only 40 MW electricity now whereas around 125 MW power was generated this time last year by Units of 1, 2 and 3.

The Means Sea Level (MSL) was 80.46 yesterday (Thursday) against 93.06 MSL this time last year, they

said. The MSL usually remains at around 100.03 during winter.

Units 1, 3 and 4 are out of operation due to drastic fall in water level of Kaptai Lake and Unit 5 is silent due to mechanical fault, KHPP sources said.

The 213 square kilometers Kaptai Lake came into being due to construction of a massive dam on Karnaphuly to install Kaptai Hydroelectric Power Project in 1960. Since then, the power plant was producing around 230 MW power a day. The lake water usually falls in the dry season beginning from April.

Frequent load-shedding-- ten to twelve times a day--has made life miserable in Rangamati hill town.

KHPP sources said, the situation may be more difficult in coming days as the lake water has fallen alarmingly before advent of the dry season due to poor rainfall in the area during the last monsoon, they said. People at places have planted IRRI-Boro paddy in different areas of the silted lake.

KHPP project manager Khandakar Shafiqul Islam was not available for comment as he went to Dhaka for official purposes.

Abdul Jalil, manager of a navigation company, said launche can not reach Baghaichhari, Jurachhari, Bilaichhari and Naniachar.



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers have planted paddy seedlings in dried up portions of Kaptai Lake.

# 2 cops suspended for drug smuggling

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira**

Two members of the Detective Branch (DB) of police including a sub-inspector (SI) were suspended here yesterday for their alleged involvement in drug smuggling.

They are SI Sakmol Hossain and constable Mustafizur Rahman.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team chased a Satkhira-bound car coming from Kaliganj on Thursday, police said. Being chased, the driver fled away leaving behind the car at Bangaler intersection in the town on the Satkhira-Kaligonj Road. Police seized the car and recovered 200 bottles of Phensidyl from the vehicle.

Later, driver Babul Gazi was arrested. On interrogation, Babul

said S I Sakmol Hossain and constable Mustafizur Rahman were on board his car. They were going towards Kulia carrying a gunny bag of Phensidyl syrup, he said. They fled away when the police van chased their vehicle, he said.

Earlier, traffic sergeant Fahim had requisitioned the car and handed it to DB constable Mustafizur Rahman, Babul said.

On investigation yesterday, police found the two policemen guilty and suspended them.

On contact, Satkhira superintendent of police (SP) Mirza Abdullahel Baki confirmed the incident.

A case was filed with Sadar Police Station accusing Babul Gazi and two unnamed persons.

Police said investigation into the matter is going on.

4X2

13.5X4