

FALLOUT OF POOR NAVIGABILITY

Fuel transport cost doubles as Chilmari depot shifted

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

Cost of fuel transport from Chilmari floating depot to other places of Kurigram district doubles as the depot has been shifted due to poor navigability of the Brahmaputra River in the dry season. Usually the transport cost of 9,000 litres of diesel from Chilmari to 35 kilometres away Kurigram town is Tk 2,000 but in the current dry season, the cost has gone up to Tk 4,800, said sources at filling stations. Filling station owners of the district are now collecting diesel and other fuels from Parbatipur Depot in Dinajpur as the alternative is much cheaper. As water level of the Brahmaputra has drastically fallen, cargoes cannot reach the floating oil depot at Chilmari and it forced authorities to temporarily shift the depot to Bangmara ghat, two kilo-

metres away.

Now oil has to be collected in drums from barges and brought to the lorries on pushcarts as the one-kilometre earthen road from the new station is too unfit for movement of lorries. "We want to collect diesel and other oils directly from the barges of the floating oil depot. But in the dry season, the carrying cost goes up to three times due to complicated transport process. Sandy and kucha road, labour-cost and wastage of oil are the main causes behind the high cost," said Aminul Islam, manager of Sekendar Filling Station in Kurigram town. The transport cost of 9,000 litres of fuel from Chilmari to Kurigram town stands at about Tk 4,800 during the dry season while it is only Tk 3,500 from Parbatipur Oil Depot in Dinajpur, he said. Taposh Chandra Roy, manager of Panir

Pump and Sons, another filling station in the town, echoed the same. They demanded construction of suitable metalled roads so that lorries can reach the terminals when the floating depot is transferred according to need. "There are four barges of Jamuna Oil Company and Meghna Oil Company in Chilmari Floating Oil Depot. Now the floating depot is kept in Bangmara ghat, two kilometres off Chilmari river port. If one kilometre pucca road is constructed, it will be possible to collect oil directly from barges of the depot," said Monjur Kader, operations officer of Jamuna Oil Company. Keeping in view the upcoming boro season the Brahmaputra River should be dredged immediately so that farmers can easily collect diesel from the oil depot, Chilmari UNO Md Enamul Haque said.



RIVER EROSION MAKES THEM DESTITUTE: Thousands of people in six unions of Islampur upazila in Jamalpur district are living miserably on the bank of Jamuna River that devoured their homesteads.

SNAPS AND SNIPPETS



Fugitive JMB man held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, C'nawabganj

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) on Tuesday arrested an ehshar of banned Islamist outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) from Shibganj upazila of the district. The arrested JMB member was identified as Yousuf Ali, 30, son of Deldar Hossain of Kaittha village under Shibganj upazila in Chapainawabganj. Rab sources said, acting on a tip-off, a special team of Rab-5 arrested fugitive Yousuf from near Kansat Palli Bidyut office at about 3:30 pm. Yousuf faces two separate cases with Shibganj police station, said an official of Rab-5.

Two held with fake notes

UNB, Satkhira

Two people were arrested along with 500 fake Saudi notes from Daulatpur village in Sadar upazila on Monday noon. The arrestees were identified as Rezaul Karim, 45, son of Sultan Ali of Mahajanpur in Ashashuni upazila and Asgar Sardar, 22, son of Abul Kashem of Puratan Satkhira. Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-6) went to the area in the guise of foreign currency buyers and arrested the two frauds. Later, the two were handed over to local police station.

Jasim Palli Mela Jan 8

BSS, Faridpur

A fortnight long village fair under the style of 'Jasim Palli Mela' coinciding the 107th birth anniversary of poet Jasimuddin will begin here on January 8 at Ambikapur 'Jasim Mancha', located adjacent to the ancestral house of the late poet. The traditional fair is being jointly organised by the district administration and Jasim Foundation commemorating the poet's birth anniversary. According to the organisers, more than a hundred stalls will be set up at the fair for display and sale of various items including indigenous handicraft. Arrangements for regular cultural and literary shows have also been made.

Car lifters held in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A joint team of police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-6) on Monday arrested five car lifters from near KDA new market under Sonadanga police station. The arrestees are Rubel alias Shumon, Saiful, Osman Sheikh, Dabir and Alip Kumar Karmaker. The four are members of a Dhaka-based gang of car lifters, said Captain Baktiar of Rab-6. A stolen microbus was recovered from their possession. It was brought to Khulna from Dhaka after stealing it on December 30 from Jatrabari. Later on January 1, a case was filed in this connection with the Jatrabari police station. The investigation officer (IO) of the case came to Khulna on Monday morning on receipt of secret information that the alleged car lifters are hiding here. The seized microbus and the car lifters were later taken to Jatrabari at night.

Liquor seized, 4 sued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Four people were sued at Mongla on Monday night on charge of bringing over 23,000 bottles of foreign liquor under false declaration. The four FIR-named accused are proprietor of Media Enterprise Md Humayun Kabir and its general manager Azad Mahatab, proprietor of Prophecy Shipping Lines Zulfiqar Monir and its manager Abdur Razzak. Sub-inspector Shwaket Hossain of Mongla police station has been made investigation officer of the case. Members of law enforcing and intelligence agencies seized over 23,000 bottles of foreign liquor worth over Tk 6 crore from two containers at Mongla Port. Commissioner of Customs Md Nurul Islam was transferred and stand released suspecting his connivance in the import of these liquor.

Drug peddlers held

UNB, Keraniganj

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) on Sunday night seized 1000 cans of beer from a private auto-rickshaw in Manu Beparir Dal area and arrested three drug peddlers. Acting on secret information, a team of Rab-10 raided the area at 09:30pm. Later, they arrested the three drug peddlers. The arrestees were identified as M Osman, 30, of Phulbaria village in Katiadi upazila of Kishoreganj, M Sahjahan, 28, of Keraniganj and M Nazrul Islam, 25, son of M Hossain of Himchhita village in Daudkandi upazila of Comilla. Two separate cases were filed.

Tea labourers in Habiganj on indefinite strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Labourers of four tea gardens under Bahubal upazila of Habiganj district yesterday began an indefinite strike demanding recognition of the tea labour union committee that was elected in October 2008.

They also demanded handing over the 'Labour House', the head office of Bangladesh Tea Labour Union (BTLU) at Srimongal, to the elected body.

Bijoy Kumar Hazra, president of Balishira tea valley unit of the BTLU, told this correspondent over phone that labourers of Kamaichhara, Daragaon, Hatimara and Baluchhara tea gardens under Bahubal upazila began an indefinite strike yesterday, responding to the call given by the elected committee of Bangladesh Tea Laborers Union. Labourers of other tea gardens of the country will join the strike in phases,

he said. Election to Bangladesh Tea Labour Union was held in October 2008 and the elected body was functioning as usual. But labour and manpower ministry dissolved the committee on November 24 and formed an ad-hoc committee. Following dissolution of the committee, a section of tea labour leaders has forcibly occupied the 'Labour House' at Srimongal on November 26, Bijoy alleged. Contacted, Bijoy Banerjee, convener of the ad-hoc committee, said the labour and manpower ministry dissolved the committee as its election was unconstitutional. According to union constitution, the ad-hoc committee will arrange a fresh election within 120 days, he said. He claimed that the labour house at Srimongal was handed over to the ad-hoc committee in a proper way.

Catch a bird poacher, get Tk 5,000 reward

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Moulvibazar district administration has taken a unique initiative to protect migratory birds at Hakaluki haor. From now on the district administration will award Tk 5,000 to each of those who can capture bird hunters. Deputy Commissioner Md Mofizul Islam made this announcement while addressing a meeting on "Costal and Wetland Biodiversity Management Project (CWBMP)" in the DC's conference room on Monday. Sounding a note of warning against the poachers, the DC said the district administration has taken some other measures to protect thousands of guest birds in the water body. The meeting was, addressed among others, by Zafar Siddiqi, project director of CWBMP, Motiur Rahman, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension, Moulvibazar, and Journalist Hasanat Kamal. Other speakers urged the authorities concerned to cancel lease of the water body and re-excavate it.

Britain's ties with Sylhet very strong: Denham

Aid to Bangladesh to rise from next year, says visiting community minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

UK Minister for Communities and Local Government John Denham MP yesterday said the British aid to Bangladesh will be raised to 150 million pounds in 2011 from this year's 126 million. He was addressing a function on signing a memorandum of understanding on 'Urban Partnership for Poverty Reduction' (UPPR) project at the conference hall of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC). Sylhet is among the six cities and 24 municipalities included in the Tk 816 crore project being implemented by LGED with DFID's contribution of Tk 749 crore, UNDP's Tk 20.55 crore and Bangladesh government's Tk 46.45 crore. Bangladesh origin people in the UK have formed a very successful community for long and by now they are an

integral part of the society there, the UK minister said, adding that they are contributing to the British economy as well as in other sectors. "The community has a majority from the greater Sylhet region and so, our relation with Sylhet is very strong. We need to work together for effective poverty reduction programme in Sylhet and other parts of the country. The programme will surely deepen and strengthen the UK-Bangladesh relation," Denham said. The Labour Party government in recent years has doubled their development assistance to developing countries despite economic problems at home, he said. Sylhet Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran, Richard Gier, international programme manager of the UPPR, and Ali Ahmed, national project director of the UPPR, also spoke while British High

Commissioner to Bangladesh Stephan Evans, DFID's Social Development Advisor Philippa Thomas were present. Later the SCC mayor and the British minister signed the MoU. The UPPR aims at poverty reduction of 30 lakh people, mostly women and girls, living in the six cities and 24 municipalities, speakers said at the meeting. Sylhet city was included in the project in September last year although it was launched in other areas in July 2007. The programme will run till March 2025. The British minister later visited Sylhet regional office of the British High Commission before going to the Moulvibazar district yesterday afternoon. John Denham, who came on a three-day visit to Bangladesh on Sunday, is scheduled to return to the UK today.



A blooming mustard field at Farabari village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila offers a captivating sight as the district awaits another bumper production of the profitable winter crop.

Thakurgaon farmers likely to see another bumper mustard crop

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thakurgaon

Farmers and agriculture officials in Thakurgaon are expecting a bumper production of mustard this season as plants have grown well everywhere in the district due to favourable weather condition. Mustard cultivation is gaining popularity among the farmers in the northern district as they got good price of the crop in last 2/3 years. The farmers have cultivated mustard on 5,625 hectares of land this season against the target of 5,406 hectares fixed by the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), officials said. Of the land, 1,825 hectares

in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila, 750 hectares in Pirgonj upazila, 800 hectares in Baliadangi upazila, 1,700 hectares in Ranishankoil upazila and 550 hectares in Haripur upazila have been bought under mustard cultivation. The farmers have cultivated mainly four varieties of mustard--BARI Sharisha 9, BARI Sharisha 11, Tori 7 and Bashori (Indian). However, mustard cultivation has faced a setback at the initial stage due to dense fog and severe cold weather in the district, said Abdul Majid, Crop Product Specialist (CPS) of Thakurgaon DAE office. But the farmers successfully overcame the adverse situation by following the

directive of DAE officials, he said, adding that maximum plants have already passed pod formation stage. The mustard plants are now growing well and all are expecting a bumper production this season, Majid said. Favourable weather and its lower production cost than other Rabi crops have encouraged farmers to cultivate mustard on more and more land, DAE officials said. The DAE authorities are now campaigning among the farmers for cultivating hybrid varieties of mustard invented by BARI between the gaps of Aman and Boro to boost economy. During a recent visit to different areas of Sadar and

Baliadangi upazilas, a number of farmers told The Daily Star that they would start harvesting the crop in the second or third week of this month. Hekmat Ali, a farmer of Dakkin Bathina village in Sadar upazila, said he cultivated mustard on one bigha land last year spending Tk 2,800 only while got six maunds of mustard. He sold per maund of mustard at Tk 1,700 and made a profit of Tk 7,400. Hekmat cultivates mustard on two bighas of land this season and expects a bumper production. Farmers and officials said October to mid-November is the suitable time for mustard cultivation while it takes 65/70 days for getting yield.

Feni Jubo League leader shot dead

A CORRESPONDENT, Feni

A Jubo League leader was shot dead by his rivals in the party in Feni on Monday night. Omar Hanif alias Tipu, president of Panchgachhia union Jubo League in Sadar upazila, was shot by the activists of his rival faction at Panchgachhia Bazar at around 8:00pm. He was rushed to Feni Sadar Hospital where he died soon after admission. Tipu's mother Feroza Begum filed a case with Sadar Police Station the same night accusing Jubo League workers Babul, Mintu, Ratan and

Farhan of the killing of her son. In the case statement, she also held 15 to 20 unidentified people responsible for the armed attack. Police arrested a man named Yusuf in connection with the killing and are looking for the other accused. Feni district Jubo League Convener M Azharul Haque alias Arju said though the killers used the name of Jubo League during the attack, actually they are not Jubo League workers. He demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of the killers.

3 outlaws held in Bagerhat, Natore

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Police arrested two more outlaws in Bagerhat on Monday and took into custody an 'operation commander' of an outlawed outfit in Natore on Tuesday. The Bagerhat outlaws were held along with their party posters in Manasa Bazaar area of Fakirhat upazila. Arrestees Kazi Ibrahim, 32, and Chengis Das, 28, were members of the banned Purbo Banglar Communist Party. Police said while conducting drives in the district they arrested two more outlaws from the bazaar area for pasting posters in the area. The outlaws in their posters urged people to join their party with a pledge to kill their 'class enemies' and sought financial help for strengthening their party activities. They also demanded toll from several businessmen in the district, issuing different threats. Earlier, the law-enforcers arrested eight outlaws of the newly formed party from the same bazaar.

All the 10 arrestees were sent to jail after producing at the chief judicial magistrate's court. Meanwhile, Hanif Sheikh, a businessman, filed an extortion case with local police station against 24 anonymous outlaws. A Correspondent from Natore reports: Police on Tuesday arrested 'operation commander' of outlawed Purba Banglar Sarbahara Party from Fulbagan area in Natore Sadar and recovered a shutter gun, a pistol and four bullets from his house. Arrestee Afzal Hossain is son of Rajab Ali of village Bamihal under Singra upazila. Police said, on a tip-off, a Natore police team raided Fulbagan area on Monday evening. Following his confessional statement, Singra police raided Afzal's Bamihal house and recovered the arms. Police said, Afzal is an active member of Purba Banglar Sarbahara Party. He faces many cases including Bamihal police camp loot, 3 ansar members murder and robbery.