

Diesel price shoots up in Sylhet region

Short supply in the last one week blamed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Shortage of diesel in the region for the last one week has shot up the price of the fuel to Tk. 60 from Tk. 44 a litre.

This has hit the extraction of stones from the country's biggest stone quarry- Bholaganj - as the use of motorised pumps in stone collection declined sharply.

Sources said, depots of state-run BPC's Padma, Jamuna and Meghna oil companies in the district have cut their supply to the agents and dealers since Saturday.

The present supply stands at two to three lakh litres as against the average demand for 5 lakh litres of diesel everyday in greater Sylhet region.

Boro farming would face a setback if the crisis is not resolved immediately, farmers apprehend.

Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) officials said a total of 3.99 lakh hectares of land in the region have been brought under the boro farming this year including 3.3 lakh hectares under irrigation.

During the last year's boro season, farmers in the region also suffered huge crop loss of about Tk 1300 crore, DAE officials informed.

General secretary of the Sylhet Division Petroleum Dealers' Association, Zubayer Ahmed Chowdhury, said that the crisis is deepening.

"There is no headway yet although the companies assured us of raising the supply immediately", Zubayer Ahmed added.

Pointing to the shortage of railway wagons and engines, district manager

of the BPC's Padma Oil Company Mir Fokhoruddin, said they have already requested the railway authorities to arrange things immediately.

Asked about the rise in the price of diesel in different upazilas, Mir Fokhoruddin said he is yet to get specific complaint in this regard. There might be some incidental rise as there is a short supply in the area, he added.

Kabir Hossain, station manager of the Bangladesh Railway, Sylhet told this correspondent on Wednesday night that they are facing a crisis of locomotives as well as tank wagons used for transporting oil.

"We have sent urgent message for arranging additional wagons and engines for the region, he said adding "The situation may improve within two to three days".



PHOTO: STAR
This brick kiln at Jafarnagar in Juri upazila of Moulvibazar district falls under the 'Ecologically Critical Area' that the government declared in 1999 to save Hakaluki Haor, especially its environment and biodiversity.

Brick kilns becoming new threat to Hakaluki Haor

RAJAT KANTI GOSWAMI, Moulvibazar

A section of influential people have continued setting up brick kilns in and around Hakaluki Haor area, posing environmental threat to one of the largest water bodies in the country.

Defying environment law, ten new brick kilns have been set up around the haor even after its declaration as an 'Ecologically Critical Area' (ECA) in 1999.

The government declared Hakaluki Haor, covering 40 thousand hectares of land areas in 11 unions of five upazilas under Moulvibazar and Sylhet districts, as an ECA to save it from rampant tree plundering, fishing by dry-

ing up shallow parts and bird hunting.

Although law prohibits establishment of brick kiln around in any ECA, nine of the 16 brick kilns around Hakaluki Haor area are located in the ECA marked area, said sources at the offices of Coastal and Wetland Biodiversity Management Project and Environment Department at Kulaura.

During a recent visit to a couple of brick kilns in Moulvibazar district, this correspondent saw that earth for manufacturing of bricks is being collected from Hakaluki Haor bed areas while smoke from the brick kilns is polluting the area. Besides, trees are being

burnt in brick kilns instead of coal, locals said.

"We issued letters to the deputy commissioners of Moulvibazar and Sylhet to remove the brick kilns around Hakaluki Haor area in 2007. A notice was also served to a kiln owner in Juri upazila to remove it," said environment department official Md Mujahidul Islam who looks after Hakaluki Haor.

Sometimes, brick kiln owners get stay orders from the court against eviction, he added.

Moulvibazar Deputy Commissioner Md Mostafizur Rahman said action will be taken against those who illegally establish brick kilns around Hakaluki Haor.

Two kids raped

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A schoolgirl and a madrasa student were raped in two places of Galachipa upazila on Monday and on February 3.

Of them, one is a student of class five and the other a student of class six.

Police and family sources said, the 10-year-old student of class five of Badura Hat Government Primary School went to the town on Monday with her brother-in-law.

In the afternoon, the girl went out to meet her brother-in-law working at a saw mill but she was kidnapped on the way. The abductor took her to Auliapur village and raped her at a house.

Police rescued the girl from the house and arrested alleged rapist Kabir Fakir. Father of the victim filed a case with Patuakhali police station in this regard.

In the other case, an 11-year-old student of class six of a Dahkil madarasa in Chotobaishdia village was gang-raped on February 3.

Father of the victim filed a case with Rangbali police station on Tuesday accusing two people.

Police said, the girl was going to her aunt's house on the day. When she reached near Nayabhangoni Primary School, one Mamun, 35, and his accomplice Ripon kidnapped her. The culprits took the victim to a house of their relative at Galachipa town. At night, they raped her at a house near the flood control dam.

After three days, when the girl disclosed the matter on return, her father filed a case in this regard.



PHOTO: STAR
This 71-foot-long symbol of a cricket bat, used in a signature campaign styled 'Big bat big wish' as a token of best wishes for the Bangladesh team in the upcoming World Cup Cricket, reached Rajshahi University campus yesterday. Akij Food and Beverages Ltd organised the programme.

Tug-of-war for 'political gain' from Felani issue

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

Local units of both ruling Awami League (AL) and main opposition BNP seem to be in the race for 'political gain' from the gruesome killing of Bangladeshi girl Felani, 15, by Indian Border Security Force on January 7.

Nageswari upazila administration on Wednesday imposed Section 144 at Felani's village Calonitari in Rumkhana union under Nageswari upazila of Kurigram district and areas adjoining the village as local AL and BNP set programmes to mourn her death there at the same time.

Later at a short press conference at hotel Arnob Palace in Kurigram town, BNP leaders blamed the government for remaining 'silent' about Felani's

killing. Earlier they demanded judgment for the killing through an international tribunal.

District BNP and Awami League also brought out separate processions in Kurigram town regarding the matter.

Felani's father Nur Islam yesterday held a press conference at Kurigram Press Club where district AL Vice President Aminul Islam Monju Mondal, Joint Secretary Alok Sarkar, district Jubo League Secretary Ruhul Amin Dulal, Nageswari upazila AL President Mojammeel Haque Proddhan, district Chhatra League President Ayub Ali and some AL activists were present.

"My daughter Felani was killed in

BSF firing on Anantapur border under Fulbari upazila of Kurigram district when she was crossing the border with me at about 6:00am on January 7. I got her body with the help of Awami League lawmaker of Kurigram-2 constituency Md Jafor Ali," Nur Islam said in a written statement at the conference.

"Home Minister Sahara Khatun gave me Tk 3 lakh on behalf of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The government has taken steps for my family's return from India," he added.

An inhabitant of Calonitari village of Rumkhana union under Nageswari upazila, Nur Islam, 35, went with his family to Asam in India in search of job about 20 years ago.

BID TO SELL GOVT WHEAT ON BLACK MARKET

One of two traders arrested

Follow-up



Nazrul Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

One of the two traders, who tried to sell 493 sacks of wheat meant for the government's schoolchildren feeding programme on black market on Tuesday night, was arrested in the city yesterday.

Police arrested Nazrul Islam from his residence at Syampur at around 12:30pm in connection with a case filed against him and his brother Sukh Chand with Boalia police station on Wednesday.

Nazrul was produced in the Metropolitan Magistrate's Court with a prayer for a three-day remand. The magistrate fixed February 13 for

hearing on the remand prayer and sent him to jail.

Sub-Inspector Abdur Razzak lodged the case, alleging that the accused received 493 sacks of wheat weighing 51 tonnes from a government granary in Bogra and hoarded them at their godown in Rajshahi city for selling on black market.

Executive Magistrate M Saiduzzaman on Tuesday night seized 493 sacks of wheat after Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members found those being sold on a black market. The magistrate also asked police to file a regular case against the persons involved.

Verdict in case against 105 Satkhira mutineers Mar 2

STAR NATIONAL DESK

The special court-1 will deliver judgement in the mutiny case against 105 jawans of 41 Battalion under Satkhira sector of Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB) on March 2.

After argument between the prosecutor and the accused, the three-member court, headed by Rajshahi Sector Commander Lt Col Yahiya Azam Khan, on Wednesday fixed the date. The two other members are Lt Col Khalid Hossain and Major Touhidul Islam, reports our correspondent.

Prosecutor Lt Col Enayet Karim told the court that the accused revolted against their officers at the battalion headquarters on February 26 in 2009.

He further said the rebels looted arms and ammuni-

tion from armoury and brought out a procession at the battalion headquarters, chanting slogans in favour of the mutineers of BGB headquarters. As many as 47 prosecution witnesses gave their depositions before the court.

Of the accused, 25 confessed to their involvement in the mutiny and begged for mercy while the remaining 80 claimed innocence.

Deputy Attorney General advocate Shashanko Shekhar Sarkar, public prosecutors Monjurul Islam and Reza ul Karim Reza were present.

In Jamalpur, the special court-17 framed charges against 52 mutineers of 6 Battalion under Mymensingh sector on Wednesday.

After hearing, the court

headed by Kushtia Sector Commander Col Md. Nazrul Islam Sarker, framed charges against the accused, according to a correspondent.

Two other members of the court are Lt Col Gazi Md Salahuddin and Major Md Ashfaque Hossain.

The complainant, Md Azizul Islam, deputy assistant director of the battalion, alleged that the accused revolted against their officers on February 26 in 2009, took control of the battalion headquarters and looted fire arms and ammunitions from armoury.

All the accused claimed innocence and begged for mercy. Deputy Attorney General advocate Md Selim was present.

The special court-15 yesterday recorded statements of 11 more prosecu-

tion witnesses in the case against 69 mutineers of 11 Battalion under Khagrachhari sector.

Earlier on Wednesday, four witnesses gave their depositions before the court. After recording statements yesterday, the court headed by Khagrachhari Sector Commander Lt Col Abu Wahab Mohammad Hafizul Haque adjourned proceedings until 9:00am on February 28.

Two other members of the court are Lt Col Sayadis Sakline and Major AZM Golam Mostafa AL Mamun.

The court on February 7 framed charges against the accused. Of them, five confessed to their involvement in the mutiny at the battalion on February 26 in 2009 while the rest 64 claimed innocence.

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