

# DINAJPUR, JOYPURHAT Old tyre sale on rise to use those as protest tool

KONGKON KARMAKAR, Dinaipur

Sale of old tyres has seen a boom in Dinaipur and Joypurhat in the last two months, not for an increase in recycling but for the rise in the frequency of different protests.

Being readily available, flammable and capable of producing huge volumes of thick black noxious smoke and of burning for long hours, tyres have become a favourite signature of protest during hartals and agitations.

A single tyre, depending on its size, costs between Tk 300 and 800.

Mohammad Shahin, running a shop selling old, used and worn out tyres in Dinaipur Bus Terminal, told The Daily Star that his sales have marked a remarkable rise in the months of November and December, thanks to the protests.

"I have sold at least 34 tyres from the first of November till December 13," he said, adding that on an average month, only around five to seven tyres are sold.

The conventional use of old tyres are in repairing others which are in a better off condition and in fuelling brick kilns, he said.

Another such shop owner in Suihari area, Md Azahar Ali, said he sold around Tk 30,000 worth tyres during the same period. "I do not know who the buyers are, but my tyres were sold off very quickly," he said.

"During the recent street protests of the opposition throughout the northern districts, the agitators burnt heaps of tyres on the streets around the town and nearby highway," said another shop owner, Md Abul Kalam Azad.

The anti-coalmine protesters also burnt scores of tyres in Phulbari upazila, including Nimtola intersection and Dhakamora areas, between November 23 and 26, blanketing the areas in black smoke.

Law enforcers said protesters burn old tyres to signify their presence and attract attention to their demands.

"Police has been dousing burning tyres at many places of the district town and elsewhere," said Dinaipur Superintendent of Police Moinul Islam, adding that such acts pose a serious fire risk.

Burning tyres releases toxic smoke and chemicals into the air, causing significant damage to the environment, said Dr Shakhawat Hossain Khan, head of soil science department of Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science & Technology University.

It also makes breathing difficult and adversely affects human health, he said.

Dinaipur Municipality Mayor Md Jahangir Alam, also the district BNP member, said, "We can demonstrate in other ways without burning tyres."



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## HARTAL SNAPSHOTS

1) In contrast to its customary environment hustling and bustling with life, Shapla Chattar in the capital's Motijheel saw a sparse presence of people and vehicles around 10:00am during yesterday's countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal called by the BNP-led 18-party alliance to protest the latest fuel price hike. 2) BNP leaders take up stance at the entrance of its Naya Paltan office. 3) Leaders and activists of Rajshahi city unit BNP sit tight on a city road after law enforcers barred them from progressing. 4) With no motorised vehicle available, a fruit trader of Savar sits precariously on top of his goods on a rickshaw in the capital's Amin Bazar around 11:00am. 5) Pickets light a fire on Chapainawabganj-Rajshahi Highway near Haripur area. 6) Buses plying long distance routes did not leave Mohakhali Bus Terminal.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ, AMRAN HOSSAIN, STAR



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## Fuel price hike protest continues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several organisations yesterday continued protesting the recent fuel price hike and demanded cancellation of the decision to increase fuel prices immediately.

They also announced several demonstration programmes to press home their demand.

The BNP-led 18-party alliance observed dawn-to-dusk hartal in the country yesterday protesting the recent fuel price hike.

The government increased the fuel prices on Thursday to reduce its subsidy burden.

Workers' Party of Bangladesh and nine other political parties yesterday announced that they would stage demonstrations across the country on January 9 demanding cancellation of the decision to increase fuel prices.

Communist Party of Bangladesh and Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal will hold protest programmes in front of the offices of Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission and district commissioners across the country on January 9.

Jatiya Mukti Council, Naya Ganotantrik Ganomorcha, Jatiya Ganotantrik Ganomancha and Jatiya Ganofront will stage demonstrations on January 8 protesting the fuel price hike.

Meanwhile, Rashed Khan Menon, president of Workers Party of Bangladesh, urged the government to cancel the fuel price hike decision.

He said, "The government is accountable to the people, not the IMF. The government has no right to hurt people by increasing fuel prices following IMF's suggestion."

Gano Oikya threatened to launch tougher movements unless the government cancelled its decision to increase fuel prices.

## Energy adviser defends fuel price hike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Energy Adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury yesterday defended the latest fuel price hike, saying that the government had no other alternative as it plans to stick to its energy subsidy target.

"We know that the cost of paddy production and transportation will increase to some extent due to the price hike, but there is no alternative," he told private television channel ATN Bangla.

"Six months have already passed of the current budget. If we are to remain close to the subsidy target then we have to raise the fuel prices," said the adviser. Tawfiq also said had the global price of oil gone down substantially then the government would have been able to remain within its energy subsidy target without increasing the prices.

"We are still providing more than Tk 10 as subsidy for per litre of diesel and

kerosene," he said.

Before Thursday's rise, the government had been paying Tk 18.77 as subsidy per litre of diesel and Tk 19.15 per litre of kerosene, according to the energy ministry.

Now the government would give subsidy on diesel and kerosene by Tk 11.77 and Tk 12.15 a litre.

The latest rise will help the government, which plans to spend Tk 8,500 crore in fuel subsidies, save up to Tk 2,500 crore, according to energy ministry officials.

The adviser also said still the diesel price in Bangladesh was Tk 8 lower than that in India.

This was the fifth fuel price hike since the Awami League-led government came to power in December 2008. It, however, did not raise any price last year despite facing huge financial strains.

## Two robbers lynched in Jessore, Madaripur

Another killed in 'shootout' with cops in Cox's Bazar

STAR REPORT

Two robbers were killed in separate mob beating in Jessore and Madaripur while another was killed in a 'shootout' between his cohort and police in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

Our Jessore correspondent reports, Abdul Aziz, 48, a leader of a robber gang locally known as 'Aziz Bahini', was killed in a mob beating in Jessore.

Police said Aziz was caught when he and his associates were trying to flee after committing a robbery at a house at Satbaria village in Kashabpur upazila.

He died at Kashabpur Upazila Health Complex, they said.

Our Madaripur correspondent reports, Abul Hossain, 30, was killed in a mob beating on Kotalipara-Rajoir road in Chawaribari area under Rajoir upazila of Madaripur.

Police said villagers caught Abul when he was taking preparation for robbing a

chicken-laden pick-up van around 11:30pm on Saturday, and gave him a good beating.

He died at Madaripur Sadar Hospital early yesterday.

In Cox's Bazar, Nasir Uddin, 30, was killed and three policemen were injured in an hour-long shootout between police and a robbers' gang in Mohseniya Kata area in Chakaria upazila early yesterday.

The injured were sub-inspectors Surajit Barua, Riton Das and Constable Roni Barua.

Acting on a tip off that a gang of robbers put up a barricade on Chakaria-Pekua-Mognama road felling wood logs around 1:30am, a team of police reached there, police said.

Police said they recovered fourteen rounds of bullets, three locally made guns, five sharp weapons and a mask from the place. Nasir died at Chakaria upazila health complex, they said.

## Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Kamaruddin Ahmed, a retired medical officer and the second son of former lawmaker Dr Sharafot Uddin Ahmed, passed away at a hospital in the capital yesterday. He was 89.

He left behind one daughter and a son, and a host of admirers to mourn his death.

He was buried at Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard in Mirpur after his namaz-e-janaza at Dhanmondi Eidgah Mosque.

## Mohammad Azizur Rahman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Mohammad Azizur Rahman, renowned businessman and socio-cultural personality of Magura, died of a heart attack at Combined Military Hospital in Jessore yesterday.

He left behind two sons, one daughter and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

He was buried in a graveyard of Parnanduali village in Magura municipality area after Asr prayers following his namaz-e-janaza on Parnanduali Baparipara mosque premises.

## Iftekher Uddin Ahmed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Iftekher Uddin Ahmed, a businessman and son of late Ashraf Uddin Ahmed, died on last Saturday in Mymensingh. He was 59.

He left behind one son and a host of well-wishers to mourn his death.

He was buried at Gulkibari graveyard in Mymensingh after his namaz-e-janaza was held on the district's Anondo Mohon College premises.

## Education sector shows rosy picture

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in due time; formulated a national education policy, fixed specific dates for beginning of classes, examinations and publishing results; widened stipend schemes; introduced online admission system at different levels; and put an apparent curb on coaching and admission business.

Teachers' demands were aplenty, yet the government provided them with monthly pay order (MPO) facility and announced to nationalise all 26,284 non-government primary schools after around 39 years.

But in reverse, it could not contain campus violence, which could have helped it earn more accolades. Unrest at different public universities continued in the last four years with clashes between associate bodies of the ruling and opposition parties and intra-party conflicts.

However, ensuring qual-

ity education still remains a big challenge for the government and to do so more budgetary allocation would be required.

Free distribution of textbooks to students of primary and secondary levels has been considered as one of the major achievements of the government.

In the wake of recurrent textbook crises, the education ministry decided to provide free textbooks for all primary, secondary and madrasa levels. In the previous years, only primary students used to get free textbooks. But by the time they could lay their hands on new textbooks, first quarter of the academic year had already passed.

The government has so far distributed 92 crore copies of textbooks since 2010 when it distributed around 19 crore copies of textbooks among students. This year, around 26.17

crore copies of textbooks are being handed over to around 3.68 crore students.

Soft copies of the books have also been put on the website of National Curriculum and Textbook Board and also on www.ebook.gov.bd.

The timely distribution of textbooks has not only contributed to an increase in the number of students but also reduced the dropout rate.

The main feature of this year's textbooks is most of those were printed in new curriculum, which is also considered as a major step. After a long 17 years, the government in line with the recommendations of the education policy has brought major changes to 111 textbooks from class I to class IX-X to keep pace with the demand of time both at home and abroad.

Framing a National Education Policy is another major accomplishment of the government. The policy

that aims to introduce a unified education system in the country has been at its implementation stage with the ministry preparing an education act in light of it.

However, proper implementation of the policy will be a major challenge as no specific budgetary allocation has yet been made to that end.

Although the government claims to have met its target of sending more than 99 percent children to primary schools, reducing the huge dropout rate further and imparting quality education are still two major tasks to fulfil.

Another remarkable feat of the last four years is the rise in pass rates in the public examinations like SSC and HSC and the number of candidates for these exams.

For example, pass rate in SSC examination that was 67.41 percent in 2009 rose to 86.32 percent in 2012.

One of the main reasons

behind the success is introduction of creative method that helped reduce students' dependence on memorisation.

On the other side, the rate of dropout at both SSC and HSC levels has declined significantly. The dropout rate at SSC level has come down to less than 20 percent in 2012 from 42 percent in 2009.

However, the rate is not yet satisfactory as several lakh students still drop out every year at this level.

Introduction of two public examinations at the end of class V and class VIII has also created competitiveness among the students. Students as well as their guardians are now serious about these exams as certificates and stipends are given on the basis of results.

The ministry has also resumed MPO facility after six-year suspension for teachers of 1,612 private educational institutions.