

No coal sale since price hike 45 days ago

Selected people who got 32,000 tonnes of coal in Barapukuria on a single day in July making huge profit

KONGKON KARMAKER, *Dinajpur*

The authorities of Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Ltd (BCMCL) could not sell any coal since rise of its price by Tk 3,480 per tonne on August 1.

The state owned company raised the coal price to Tk 15,991 per tonne from previous Tk 12,511, BCMCL sources said.

According to the official data, the mine's coal sale was around 1.68 lakh tonnes between June 14 to July 18 this year.

Of it, 32,000 tonnes of coal was sold on July 17 to some selected people at Tk 12,511 per tonne.

On July 19, the authorities mysteriously stopped coal sale although there was enough stock at its yard and around 364 people applied for the coal, said local traders.

Following a Daily Star report on the matter, the coal mine officials later decided to sell 36,400 tonnes coal more to 364 applicants (each person got 100 tonnes of coal) till July 30, and decided to raise the price to Tk 15,991

with effect from August 1.

After that, the mine authorities could not sell even a tonne of coal in last one and a half months, said BCMCL sources.

Local coal traders alleged that the authorities raised the coal price on August 1, so that the selected people who had got the 32,000 tonnes of coal can make good profit by selling those.

Coal consumers are taking it from the people who stocked the coal after buying at previous rate instead of going to the BCMCL outlet as the current official rate is too high, said the traders.

Each person, who stocked coal buying it at the previous rate, is making a profit of at least Tk 2,000 per tonne, they said.

"We are not buying coal from the mine as the price is too high," said Mujibur Rahman, president of Barapukuria Coal Traders' Association.

Bangladesh Power Development Board is the biggest consumer of BCMCL coal for generating power from the coal fired 250WM power

plant, set up beside the mine in Parbatipur upazila of Dinajpur.

The power plant requires 1,500 to 2,000 tonnes of coal daily for generating power.

Brickfield operators in the country comprise the second largest user group of the coal of Barapukuria.

"If the coal price remains too high, the options left for us is to use logs or imported coal for baking bricks when the next brick manufacturing season starts," said a brick operator in Parbatipur upazila of Dinajpur.

Coal users have urged the government to take initiative to keep the coal price affordable.

Habib Uddin Ahmed, managing director of BCMCL, said currently there is stock of over three lakh tonnes of coal at the mine yard.

Asked about the coal sale in last 45 days, he said, "The coal sale dropped as it's a dull season."

The coal users have raised the question why the BCMCL authorities increased the coal price during the dull season.

Worker falls on boiled rice, dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

A rice mill worker, who suffered burn injuries while working at a mill in Rangpur on Tuesday, died at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) on Friday night.

The victim was Swapan Mia, 18, son of Ashraful Mia of Jor-Indra area in Rangpur city.

Swapan was a worker of Momen Uddin Haji Auto Rice Mill in Rangpur Sadar upazila. He accidentally fell on a pile of boiled rice. He was rushed to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

He suffered 70 percent burnt injuries, doctors said. Later, doctors referred him to DMCH, where he died on Friday night.

Cop's generous initiative

OC arranges hapless elderly man's decent life as home member

MD AMINUL ISLAM, *Mymensingh*

A police officer in the town has set a unique example of humanity, taking the responsibility of a hapless senior citizen.

Md Kamrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, took Kasam Ali, aged around 90, to his residence as he was moved to see the latter begging in the town on Thursday.

Kasam, hailing from Mirkandapara village in Poanganj union of Mymensingh Sadar upazila, is father of nine children including five sons.

Utterly neglected by his children for long, he used to manage his food by begging.

"Earlier he stayed on the veranda of the houses of his day labourer sons as they did not even allow him to stay inside their

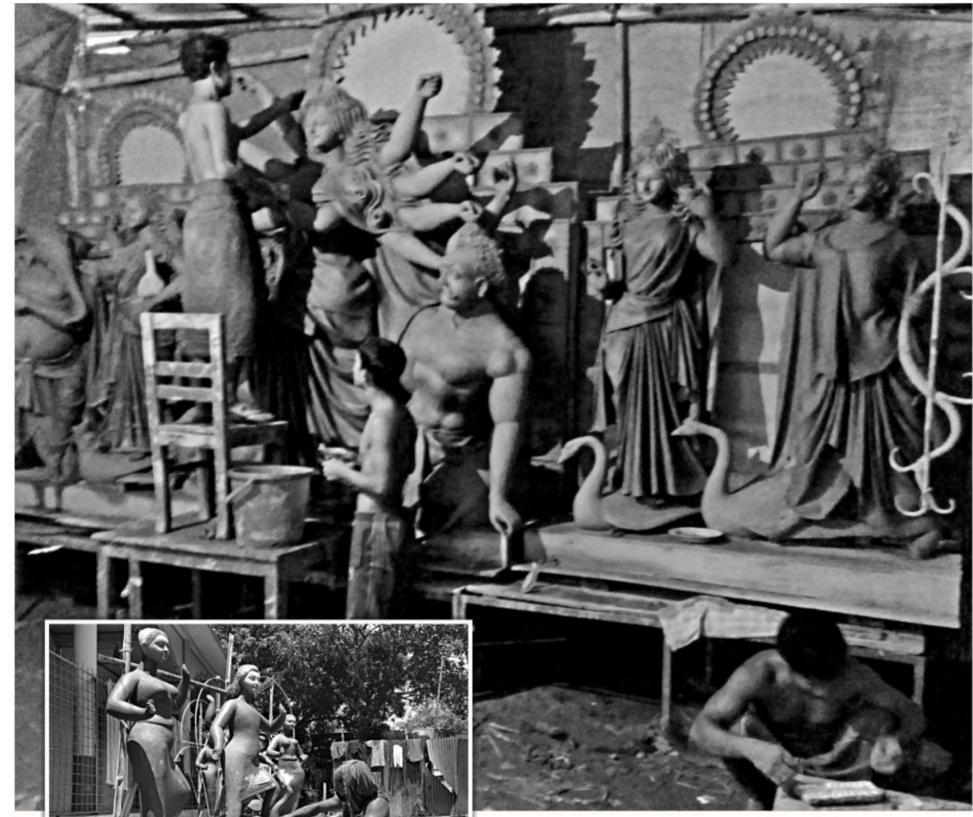
houses. Recently they drove him out," the OC quoted Kasam Ali saying.

"Seeing the old man feebly walk beside a street, I wanted to know about him. Hearing his pathetic story, I decided to take his responsibility," he said.

"He is suffering from respiratory problems. I have already contacted a medicine specialist for arranging his treatment.

"I am very happy to get the chance to support the elderly man. I call him chacha (uncle) and have told him to stay with ease at my house the rest of his life as I will try my best to arrange a decent life for him if Allah wills," said the generous police official.

Kasam said, "I am now happy to get shelter and food security. I do not want to return to my children again."



Sculptors in Bagerhat, and Brahmanbaria, inset, are busy giving last minute touches to statues of Goddess Durga in preparation for upcoming Durga Puja. PHOTO: STAR

Final touches to idols ahead of Durga Puja

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Sculptors in Bagerhat and Brahmanbaria are busy giving the finishing touches to idols of Goddess Durga ahead of Durga puja.

The biggest festival of Bangalee Hindus will be held in 606 temples in Bagerhat, Deputy Commissioner Tapan Kumar Biswas said.

Durga Puja will start on September 19 with the Mahalaya ceremony. It will begin formally on September 25. The five-day long Sharodiya Utsab will end on September 30 through Bijoya Dashami.

Hundreds of idols are being made in several temples in the district. Among them, Hakimpur Shikderbari temple, Chulkaithi Bonikpara temple, Fakirhat temple and Karapara Sarbajanin temple are important, our Bagerhat correspondent reports.

"We hope that people of all reli-

gions will enjoy the festival," said Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad secretary, also acting president of District Puja Udjapan Parishad of Bagerhat, advocate Milon Kumar Banerjee.

Superintendent of Police Pankaj Chandra Roy said names and mobile numbers of police officers will be displayed in every temple, so that if there is a problem, the police can take immediate action, he added.

Durga Puja will be held in 524 temples in Brahmanbaria, our Brahmanbaria correspondent reports.

Sculptors in the district are busy giving the final touches to the idols. They earn Tk 25,000 to Tk 2 lakh from each temple.

Nikhil Chandra Paul said he has been running this business after the death of his father, Dharendra Chandra Paul. He earns a good amount ahead of Durga puja and has

completed 50 percent of his work, adding that he expects to finish the rest in time for the puja.

Brahmanbaria Puja Udjapan Parishad President Sumesh Ranjan Roy said 137 puja mandaps have been set up in Nasirnagar upazila, 100 in Nabinagar, 70 in Sadar, 58 in Bijoy Nagar, 47 in Sarail, 42 in Kasba, 38 in Bancharampur, 17 in Akhaura and 15 in Ashuganj upazilas.

"Members of the Puja Udjapan Parishad will monitor all the mandaps to ensure that the festival is celebrated peacefully," said Bimal Chakraborty, general secretary of the District Puja Udjapan Parishad.

Assistant Superintendent of Police Md Iqbal Hossain said special security measures, uninterrupted electricity supply and traffic management will be ensured during the puja. A team of policemen along with Ansars will be deployed in each temple.



Vehicles get stuck in long tailback at Daulatdia ferry terminal yesterday due to shortage of ferries.

PHOTO: STAR

Vehicles stranded for hours

The situation was created due to shortage of ferries in Paturia, Daulatdia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Manikganj*

A two-kilometre-long queue of vehicles was seen at Paturia under the district while a five-kilometre-long tailback was created at Daulatdia ferry ghat in Rajbari yesterday afternoon, causing immense sufferings to thousands of passengers of 19 south western districts.

The situation was created due to shortage of ferries and it has been continuing since Wednesday, said officials of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC).

Visiting the two ferry terminals yesterday afternoon, this correspondent talked to the passengers who were stranded at the ghats for more than four to five hours.

Passengers Abdus Salam of Meherpur and Deepali Saha of Gopalganj and many others said they have to wait for four to five hours to cross the Padma river. They are

facing serious problem due to lack of toilet and baby food.

Despite repeated pleas, the authorities are yet to take any steps to end the public's sufferings, they said.

Manager (Marine) of BIWTC's Arich office Abdus Sattar said 14 ferries out of 20 are currently operating on Paturia-Daulatdia river route as six ferries are being repaired.

Two Ro Ro ferries and a utility ferry are being repaired at Narayanjanj dockyard while a Ro-Ro ferry, a K-Type ferry and a utility ferry are being repaired at the floating workshop in Paturia ferry terminal in Manikganj, he said.

Due to the weakness of the engine, Ro-Ro Ferry Bir Shreshtha Matiar Rahman cannot be run at night, he added.

The situation will be under control after setting up new engines in the Ro-Ro ferries Bir Shreshtha Hamidur and Bir Shreshtha Motiur, he said.

Brutality in name of jaundice cure

Mobile court fines kabiraj, his son

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

A mobile court fined a fake kabiraj and his son in Shahzadpur upazila of Sirajganj on Friday on charge of treating a jaundice patient in a brutal way.

The court, led by Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Alimul Rajib, fined Abdur Rashid alias Kakila Baba Tk 3 lakh, in default to suffer three years' imprisonment.

The accused injured a part of a patient's head with a *boti* and rubbed *sindur* and herbal medicines on the wound in the name of treating jaundice.

"This is an absolutely inhuman method of treatment. It is superstition and there is no scientific basis for such treatment," Alimul said over phone.

Locals said Kakila Baba lives in a rented house near Baghabari river port. Many jaundice patients from Pabna, Sirajganj and adjoining districts go to him for treatment, they added.

Eighth grader found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

The body of a schoolgirl was recovered from Rangamatia village in Phulbaria upazila of the district yesterday.

The victim was identified as Sabiha Akhter Shimu, 13, an eighth grader at Rangamatia High School, police said. Shimu was daughter of Abdul Hye, a Qatar expatriate.

Officer-in-Charge (investigation) of Phulbaria Police Station Abul Khayer said the girl's family members found her hanging from the ceiling of her house around 5:00am and informed police.

Madrassa teacher held for abusing boy sexually

Headmaster arrested for rape attempt on girl

STAR COUNTRY DESK

A madrasa teacher was held in Jessore on Friday on charge of assaulting a male student sexually.

Meanwhile, police arrested a school headmaster of Jhalakathi yesterday on charge of attempting to rape a female student.

Arrestee Hafez Khobayer Uddin, 42, is a teacher of Andulia Hafizia Madrasa at Andulia village in Jessore's Chaugachha upazila, reports our Benapole correspondent. Police said Khobayer sexually assaulted the boy in his bedroom on Thursday night. The victim revealed the brutality to his parents the following day.

On information, locals caught Khobayer from his rented house at Andulia village.

Befitting reply to rogue romeo

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jhalakathi*

A courageous schoolgirl taught a good lesson to a boy as the latter made obscene overtures to her on the way to school yesterday morning.

The courageous girl is a Class IX student of a local high school, said Md Harun-Or-Rashid, officer in charge (investigation) of Rajapur Police Station.

"When she reached near the school gate in the morning, a few boys uttered obscene words directing at her. At once the girl reacted, slapping one of them on the face. She also hit him on the head with a piece of brick. Meantime, the boy's companions fled away," he said, referring to the girl's statement.

"The boy, Toufique Hossain Joy, a Class X student of Rajapur Pilot High School, has been taken under police custody. The girl filed a case with the police station against Joy and his three to four other accomplices," the OC said.