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Insurers' profits decline amid economic slowdown, war

BPC plans to import diesel, jet fuel from Russia

MD. NAZRUL ISLAM, Chattogram

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) is considering buying discounted diesel and jet fuel from Russia as it seeks relief from the elevated prices in the global market.

The development comes after Russian state-owned company ROSNEFT Oil in the last week of July sent a fresh proposal for exporting refined oil to Bangladesh instead of crude oil, said officials of the ministry of energy and mineral resources.

ROSNEFT is offering diesel at \$59 a barrel, which is almost half the price of refined diesel in the international market.

"We are seriously considering the issue in the current global context," said a top official of the

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Three coaches of Drutojan Express, which runs on Dhaka-Panchagarh route, lie beside the rail line near Dhirasram railway station in Joydevpur yesterday, a week after those came off the track. The delay in the salvage operation is only worsening the damages to the coaches.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'POLICE EXCESS' Probe finds Barguna ASP, 12 others guilty

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 13 police officials, including Additional Superintendent of Police Mohorom Ali, have been found guilty of misbehaviour and using excessive force during a recent clash between two Barguna Chhatra League factions.

A three-member probe committee also found them guilty of breaching disciplinary regulations and command of the force, SM Aktaruzzaman, deputy inspector general of Barishal range, told The Daily Star yesterday.

A day after the incident, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said the use of force was excessive.

He said the probe committee also recommended

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Teesta, a knot that just won't unravel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After a gap of over 12 long years, Bangladesh and India will hold a minister-level meeting of the Joint Rivers Commission in New Delhi on August 25 to discuss unresolved issues of water sharing of transboundary rivers.

Dhaka expects to conclude the negotiations on six transboundary rivers, which have been going on for more than two decades. Besides, the much-talked Teesta water-sharing treaty will also be discussed.

Sources, however, said the Teesta deal will not be signed at the meeting but Bangladesh will keep pressing its neighbour for it.

The secretary-level talks of the JRC start in New Delhi today.

Contacted, Mahmudur Rahman, member of JRC, Bangladesh, said, "We finalised the Teesta water-sharing deal in 2010 and we are still waiting to sign it."

The Teesta deal fell through in 2011 as West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee vetoed the deal at the last minute on the grounds that her state needed more water from the river. Since then, Bangladesh has been perusing the deal with no headway.

Seeking anonymity, an official working with the JRC, Bangladesh, said this time the main focus of the talks would be water-sharing of six common rivers — the Muhuri, Monu, Dharla, Khowai, Gumti and Dudhkumar.

Besides, the two sides could finalise a deal on withdrawal of water from Kushiara river for irrigation of 5,000 hectares of farmland in the bordering areas of Sylhet's Zakiganj upazila. The deal could be signed during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's India visit on September 5-7, added the official.

"We hope to fix a time frame for finalising the deals on six transboundary rivers," said Malik Fida A Khan, a member of the JRC Technical Committee and executive director of Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services.

Also, the two sides could finalise a date for starting a joint study on the best use of water of the Padma, he said.

Officials at the water resources ministry said the Bangladesh side will voice its concern about industrial waste flowing into Bangladesh through bordering areas in Brahmanbaria's Akhaura upazila.

Dhaka will also ask for detailed flood

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DEATH IN CUSTODY Cops forced family to receive body

Alleges widow; Sumon buried at Azimpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The wife of Sumon Sheikh, who died in police custody three days ago, yesterday alleged that police forced them to receive his body from the morgue, and that his burial was arranged without her knowledge.

Hearing the news of the burial, Sumon's wife Jannat Begum rushed to the Azimpur graveyard in the evening. She fainted seeing the arrangement there. Regaining senses, she could see her husband's face just before he was buried.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Sumon's father Peyar Ali said police and some local Awami League leaders went to his West Rampura home around 2:00am yesterday. They forced him to receive the body from the morgue of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College



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SAVING ELECTRICITY New timings for offices

Schools to have two-day holidays, govt decides in cabinet meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has rescheduled office hours and increased weekly holidays for educational institutions as part of measures to save electricity.

The decisions regarding working hours, made in a cabinet meeting yesterday, will come into effect tomorrow.

However, no limits were placed on office hours of private organisations in the meeting, presided over by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who joined it virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

"The decisions have been taken to make power management more effective. It is not possible to increase power production instantly. That is why some discussions took place on how power could be managed without interrupting major industries that are imperative," said Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam after the meeting.

"From Wednesday [tomorrow], all government and autonomous offices will run from 8:00am to 3:00pm," he said.

Banks will be open from 9:00am to 4:00pm, the cabinet secretary said, adding that Bangladesh Bank would issue a circular in this regard.

"There will be two benefits. Electricity will be saved and traffic congestion will be spread out."

The government also decided to keep the production of fertiliser uninterrupted.

"It takes time to reopen the fertiliser factories. So, the meeting decided to keep two of the four state-owned [urea] fertiliser factories operational," he said.

Shahjalal Fertilizer Company and Chittagong Urea Fertilizer Factory Ltd are the two that are in operation, said Omar Faruk, managing director of Shahjalal Fertiliser Company.

Jamuna Fertilizer Company and Ashuganj Fertilizer and Chemical Company are currently not in operation, he added.

The meeting also decided to provide uninterrupted electricity in rural areas during off-peak hours for about 15 days for the irrigation of Aman fields.

"There is severe scarcity of water. Compared to July last year, there was 57 percent less rainfall this July," he said.

Ministers, including Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque, proposed uninterrupted power in rural areas from midnight to dawn for about 10-15 days for smooth irrigation, said the cabinet secretary.

Contacted, Balai Krishna Hazra, additional secretary of agriculture ministry, said they have learnt from the weather department that there will be less rainfall in the northern districts.

"Aman is a rainfed crop. Since there will be less rainfall, we'll demand enough power supply so that we can provide sufficient water for irrigation," he said.

Replying to a question, he said the agriculture ministry would sit with all stakeholders including the power division today to fix a timetable for power supply.

SCHEDULE CHANGES

Hours after the meeting, the public administration ministry in a circular

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Government/autonomous office hours: 8:00am-3:00pm

Bank transaction period: 9:00am-3:00pm

No decision on work hours of private organisations

Uninterrupted off-peak power supply to rural areas for irrigation

Most tea workers continue protest for pay hike

Disregard deal signed by their leaders

MINTU DESHWARA

Many tea plantation workers continued their protest yesterday, disregarding their union leaders' agreement on the withdrawal of ongoing strike demanding pay hike.

On Sunday night, the union leaders and Moulvibazar district administration signed an agreement that stated that the workers would withdraw strike until the prime minister resolves their problem in a meeting before Durga Puja.

However, workers of 131 tea estates, of 135, rejected the agreement and protested yesterday demanding Tk 300 daily wage.

Hundreds of workers staged a three-hour-long demonstration at the Luhayuni point in Kulaura, blocking the Dhaka-Bianibazar highway.

Their fellow workers also blocked Kamalganj point on Sreemangal-Bramanbazar road for three hours while staging a rally in Sreemangal town for an hour.

Ranjita Tanti, a tea worker said, "We have been on the streets for food and we cannot afford it with Tk120 wage daily."

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PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Workers of Lakkatura tea garden wait to have their tea leaves weighed after day's work. They are among those who joined work yesterday after an 11-day strike demanding wage hike to Tk 300 a day from Tk 120. Most other workers, however, continued the work abstention elsewhere although their leaders announced an end to the protests after garden owners agreed to raise the wage to Tk 145.

Bangladeshi-born Fahmida in Pulitzer prize winning team

STAR REPORT

Bangladeshi-born Fahmida Azim has been named as a part of the Pulitzer winning team for Illustrated Reporting and Commentary

for its work that featured in The Insider.

The Insider is an independent online newspaper, specialising in investigative journalism, fact-checking and political analytics.

Other than Fahmida, the winning team includes Anthony Del Col, Josh Adams and Walt Hickey of the Insider in New York, according to The Pulitzer Prizes website.

They have been awarded for "using graphic reportage and the comics medium to tell a powerful yet intimate story of the Chinese oppression of the Uyghurs, making the issue accessible to a wider public," the website said.

Their reportage "How I escaped a Chinese internment camp" was published

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