Sitrang causing concern in coastal areas

STAR REPORT

People of 19 coastal districts are concerned over the just formed cyclone "Sitrang" over the east-central Bay, which is expected to make landfall in Bangladesh within the next 48 hours.

Because of inadequate embankment protection, residents on the coastal belt and river islands have voiced concerns over widespread destruction caused by the cyclone.

Moni Shikder, of Patuakhali's Rangabali upazila, which is detached from the mainland, said everyone there was in a state of panic and feeling vulnerable since they heard about the cyclone.

"If the cyclone turns severe then it would cause large-scale damage to lives and properties here."

According to the Met's latest special weather bulletin, the weather turned inclement and the sea turbulent as the deep depression intensified into a cyclonic storm.

A ship was sent to St Martin's to evacuate nearly 400 stranded tourists on the island yesterday.

Travelling to and from the island

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

A LOOMING STORM ... There is not a speck of blue to be seen above the Bay of Bengal, as dark clouds threaten the havoc that could be unleashed in the form of Cyclone Sitrang. The cyclone is expected to make landfall in Bangladesh within the next 48 hours, and has residents in coastal areas worried about the destruction it could leave behind. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Pledge not to use power during the day

Energy adviser to PM asks business leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid an energy crisis that has led to severe load-shedding, the energy adviser to the prime minister yesterday urged people to try to save electricity so that more gas could be supplied to industries.

Addressing a group of businessmen and trade body leaders during an event at the Westin Dhaka, Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury asked businesspeople to make a pledge "not to use electricity in the daytime".

He also said there was no quick fix to the crisis of gas supply to industrial units, which have already lost up to 60 percent productivity due to low gas pressure.

Everybody has to be very alert about the use of gas and electricity, Tawfiq said, adding that the government is determined to continue supply of gas and electricity to the agricultural and industrial sectors.

He urged businessmen to have patience and remain confident as the government has been trying to improve the gas and electricity supply situation.

He said the government is working to supply

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5

PM to visit Japan on Nov 29-30

Dhaka eyes strategic partnership, FTA

PORIMOL PALMA

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will visit Japan from November 29-30.

During the visit, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida will hold a bilateral meeting, and the two sides are likely to sign a number of memorandums of understanding on cooperation.

Officials are making a detailed plan for the visit, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told The Daily Star yesterday.

The trip is considered crucial for Japan and Bangladesh because both the countries are important partners in the Indo-Pacific region.

The visit takes place as the two countries are celebrating 50 years of diplomatic relationship.

"Bangladesh and Japan launched a comprehensive partnership in 2014. Since then, Japan has made more investments in Bangladesh. Bilateral trade has also increased. During the PM's visit, there is a likelihood of raising the tie to a strategic partnership," a foreign ministry official said.

In 2020-2021, Japan provided $2.63 billion assistance to Bangladesh, higher than any other country.

Japan is implementing some of the major projects in Bangladesh including the MRT line in Dhaka, deep-sea port at Matarbari, third terminal of Dhaka airport, and special economic zone at Araihazar.

According to the foreign minister, Japan is interested in managing the deep-sea port at Matarbari and the third terminal of Dhaka airport. Besides, Japan wants to sell defence equipment to Bangladesh.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Gas crisis blamed for high price of sugar

MOHAMMAD SUMAN *and* SUKANTA HALDER

Sugar has become dearer with prices going up by Tk 15 a kg at retail markets as millers cut supplies blaming insufficient gas flow at refineries.

Packaged sugar, preferred by households, is now also hard to find in neighbourhood stores.

Consumers, who are already battered by high inflation, have to pay as high as Tk 110 to get a kg of loose sugar, the correspondents found when visiting most kitchen markets in Dhaka and Chattogram cities yesterday.

Retailers and wholesalers said refiners cut deliveries of the sweetener, for which Bangladesh relies highly on import, creating a crisis in the market.

"We are not getting sugar as per requirement. There is a crisis in the market. You will find sugar in two out of 10 stores here," said Abul Hashem, a sugar wholesaler at Moulvibazar in Old Dhaka.

Hashem, also a former vice-president of Bangladesh Sugar Merchants Association, said the situation worsened gradually over the last 15 days.

At Khatunganj, a wholesale market in Chattogram, prices of sugar shot up by Tk 100-150 per maund (37.32 kg) to Tk 3,780-3,800a maund in the last two days in the face of falling supply, said Anamul Haque, owner of Shah Amanat Trading.

At retails in the port city yesterday, consumers had to pay up to Tk 110 for a kg of the sweetener, which cost less thanTk 100 per kg a week ago.

In Dhaka city, consumers had to spend much higher than the government's fixed price of Tk 90 a kg amidst reduced availability of the item.

And ina meeting with the Directorate of National Consumers Right Protection (DNCRP) yesterday, traders of Karwan Bazar demanded adequate supply of the sweetener to contain prices.

Refiners said imports of sugar continue to be normal but reduced gas supply affected the refining as the process requires steaming. Mills also depend on gas for their own electricity generation.

Biswajit Saha, director for corporate and regulatory affairs at City Group, said it was now supplying 1,200 to 1,400 tonnes of sugar daily, which is half of its usual daily production of 3,000 tonnes.

Taslim Shahriar, senior assistant general manager of Meghna Group of Industries, said the commodity importer and processor was supplying 1,800 tonnes daily.

Businesspeople said the daily supply of sugar by private mills stands ataround 4,000 tonnes, which is half of the total production capacity.

Bangladesh requires 5,000-6,000 tonnes of sugar daily, they added.

Monwar Hossain, owner of Yasin General Store at the capital's Karwan Bazar, said dealers did not deliver any sugar for the last seven days.

"Given the current situation, prices of sugar will rise."

However, AHM Shafiquzzaman, director general of the DNCRP, yesterday said the sugar price would return to normal soon.

The DNCRP spoke to top officials of the gas distribution companies and Petrobangla about ensuring adequate gas supply to the refineries, he added.

"The officials assured me that

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Engineer stabbed to death near Dhanmondi Lake

Police suspect muggers killed him

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A marine engineer was stabbed to death in the capital's Dhanmondi Lake area apparently by muggers during load-shedding early yesterday.

Victim Shahadat Hossain Majumder, 51, was a resident of Kalabagan area.

Ekram Ali Mia, officer-in-charge of Dhanmondi Police Station, said they primarily suspect it was an act of mugging. However, the incident is being investigated, keeping every possible motive in mind, he added.

He added that a mobile phone, Tk 2,000 and an ATM card went missing from Shahadat's possession.

The OC said the stabbing took place after 12:00am and there was a power cut at the time.

"The spot from where the body was recovered is covered by a CCTV camera, but no footage of the incident was found as there was a power cut from 12:00am to 1:00am," said the OC, adding that they were going through footage of nearby CCTV cameras.

Police recovered a knife from the area. The footage of a nearby CCTV camera shows a youth fleeing the area, he said.

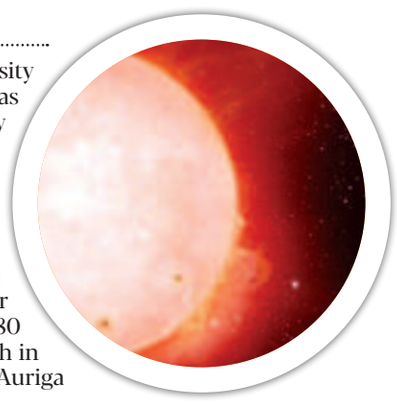
On information, police recovered the body from near Rabindra Sarobar around 2:30am and sent it to Dhaka Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

The body bore at least four stab marks, the OC said.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Astronomers discover 'fluffiest planet ever'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK



A planet with the density of a marshmallow has been discovered by scientists.

The planet, identified as TOI-3757 b, is the fluffiest ever found, orbiting around a cool red dwarf star approximately 580 light-years from Earth in the constellation of Auriga the Charioteer.

The star has a diameter of 150,000 kilometres, making it slightly larger than Jupiter, and orbits its host star once every 3.5 days. The research team calculated TOI-3757 b's average density as being 0.27 grams per cubic, which is about one quarter the density of water – and would float if placed in a large enough bathtub.

Red dwarf stars are the smallest and dimmest type of "main-sequence stars" – stars that convert hydrogen into helium in their cores – at a steady rate. These stars, while colder compared to the Sun, can erupt in powerful flares and as such make it rare for planets to form around them.

"Giant planets around red dwarf stars have traditionally been thought to be hard to form," said Shubham Kanodia,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Once 200 feet wide, the Basia river, a branch of the Surma, does not even look like a stream now as the river has been encroached on at different points and not been dredged for long. Locals do not get irrigation water in the dry season. Their demand for dredging falls on deaf ears. The photo was taken at Masukganj Bazar in Sylhet Sadar upazila on Saturday. PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Dhaka gets new police chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khandker Golam Faruq, an additional inspector general of police serving as the rector of the Police Staff College, has been appointed as the commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

The Public Security Division of the home ministry issued a circular in this regard yesterday.

Faruq will take charge on October 29 as DMP Commissioner Shafiqul Islam will go on retirement that day.

An alumnus of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Faruq joined Bangladesh Police as an assistant superintendent in the 12th BCS batch.

He worked as superintendent of police in several districts including Thakurgaon, Kishoreganj, Jhalakathi, Jamalpur, and Mymensingh.

He also served as deputy inspector general of Rangpur Range Police and Chattogram Range Police.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1