



Exploring the delectable world of Durga Puja bhog



Why we should care about the WGA strike



The OTT extravaganza hosts its second iteration



China, Russia find common cause in Gaza crisis



Dredgers are being used to extract sand from the Someshwari river in Netrakona's Durgapur upazila. Trucks have been loaded to take sand away. Dredging has put the entire Bijoypur area at risk of erosion. Environmentalists say unplanned extraction of sand from riverbed damages biodiversity and livelihoods. The photo was taken on Wednesday.

PHOTO: SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Illegal sand mining killing Someshwari

Biodiversity, livelihoods in the area at stake

SAJJAD HOSSAIN, Back from Netrakona

Several years ago, the Someshwari river would draw locals in large numbers in Netrakona's Durgapur upazila. They would wade in water with fishing nets, bathe or stand on the banks with fishing lines.

This picture has now been replaced by an unpleasant one -- hundreds of dredging machines destroying the very nature that sustained life and livelihood.

An eight-kilometre stretch of the river in Durgapur has become a haven for those extracting sand from the riverbed in an unregulated manner, with former Awami League lawmaker Mushtaque Ahmed Ruhi dominating the local scene.

According to environmentalists, unregulated sand mining muddies the water, and destroys plant and fish

habitats. It poses a severe threat to local biodiversity and livelihood.

Over the last six months, Ruhi, who was a lawmaker from Netrakona-1 in the 9th parliament, deployed nearly 1,000 dredgers that operate round the clock. Operating dredgers round the clock is a clear violation of the Balumahal and Soil Management Act-2010.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found that Ruhi's workers built a dirt road by illegally filling sections of the river with sand. The workers said around 1,000 trucks ply the road

on a daily basis to carry the wet sand away. The truckers pay a fee for using the road.

Many of the dredgers used by Ruhi's men are locally made. Known as "Bangla dredgers", these devices use engines that pump sand from the riverbed to the bank.

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'NON-STOP MOVEMENT' AFTER OCT 28 BNP hesitant to go for hartals, blockades

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

BNP leaders have recently been making threats of non-stop and tough agitation, but the party appears to be in a dilemma over programmes such as hartal and roadblock.

Party insiders say they are hesitant to go for hartal and blockade-like programmes as the arson attacks during their movement centring the January 5, 2014, election drew flak from home and abroad.

At the same time, many of the top leaders have come to the realisation that peaceful rallies in Dhaka and other cities may garner public support, but the government will not feel any pressure to resign.

"In this situation, we have no choice but to enforce hartal and blockade-like programmes. But such programmes cannot be sustained for long," said a senior leader, wishing not to be named.

Besides, the economy is going through a crisis, and events like hartal may adversely affect people's livelihood, he said, adding, "This may eventually make us look bad."

The party has been organising rallies and taking out processions across the country in a peaceful and non-violent manner for the last one and a half years.

While the peaceful events are lauded everywhere, these will not get the BNP what it wants, said several other leaders.

"At some point, we will have to go for blockade and hartal," he said, adding that hartal and blockade will be carefully planned and only used as a last resort.

BNP's series of hartal and blockades before and after the January 5, 2014, election almost paralysed people's lives. But that movement didn't see success.

The party last week said it will announce non-stop tough

programmes from a grand rally to be held in the capital on October 28. However, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir has yet to mention hartal or blockades in his speeches.

BNP leaders are sure that as soon as they announce something like hartal, the ruling Awami League will hark back to the arson attacks from 2014.

"Hartal-like programmes may be announced only when the movement gains momentum," said a BNP leader.

Some party leaders say the final phase of the movement will start through laying siege to important buildings and sit-in events mainly in Dhaka.

During the series of talks the BNP held with like-minded parties, the latter recommended programmes like hartal.

Mahmudur Rahman Manna, convener of the Nagorik Oikya,

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Shakib's fitness overshadows all concerns

MAZHAR UDDIN from Mumbai

Following three defeats on the trot, a demoralised Bangladesh team reached Mumbai yesterday while not knowing whether Shakib Al Hasan will be



able to lead from the front in their fifth game of the ongoing ICC World Cup.

The Tigers are supposed to rest today and will begin training at the Wankhede Stadium tomorrow

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Warner, Marsh star as Australia down Pakistan

AFP, Bengaluru

Australia rode on punishing centuries from openers David Warner and Mitchell Marsh to beat Pakistan by 62 runs in their World Cup game in Bengaluru on Friday.

Australia's total of 367-9 was built on Warner's 163 with Marsh, on his 32nd birthday, hitting 121.

Pakistan were undone by poor bowling and fielding which saw Warner dropped when he had made just 10.

"It was awesome," said man of the match Warner. "For us to go out there and put in a performance and a score on the board like that is very pleasing."

Leg-spinner Adam Zampa then ripped through the middle-order with figures of 4-53 as Pakistan were bowled out for 305 in 45.3 overs, leaving both teams on two wins and as many losses.

Mohammad Rizwan (46) and Saud Shakeel (30) added 57 for the fourth wicket as Pakistan needed 168 from the last 20 overs but Pat Cummins dismissed Saud Shakeel while Zampa accounted for Rizwan, Iftikhar Ahmed (26) and Mohammad Nawaz (14) to end their resistance.

"The first 34 overs in the bowling and fielding cost us," admitted Pakistan skipper Babar Azam. "We dropped Warner and such batters don't

spare you. This is a big-scoring ground and we missed our mark."

Pakistan were given a solid start of 134 -- only their second hundred opening stand this year -- by Imam-ul-Haq (70) and Abdullah Shafique (64).

Australia dropped Shafique with substitute Sean Abbott spilling a simple chance over the boundary off Cummins when the opener had made 27 while the skipper then dropped Imam off Zampa when the batsman was on 48.

But Marcus Stoinis's short-pitched deliveries claimed both the openers within the space of 20 runs while Cummins pulled off a splendid catch at mid-wicket off Adam Zampa to dismiss Babar for 18.

Earlier, Warner and Marsh set up Australia's imposing total.

Warner survived a leg-before appeal off the very first ball of the match and was then dropped on 10 in the fifth over, before cracking a punishing 124-ball 163 after Australia were sent in to bat on a flat Chinnaswamy Stadium pitch.

Marsh clobbered a 108-ball 121 as the pair raced to an Australian World Cup opening stand record of 259 by the 34th over, much to the delight of a 30,000 crowd.

Warner's innings had 14 boundaries and nine towering sixes as he and Marsh spared

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ATTACKS ON GAZA Nation today mourns deaths of Palestinians

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will observe a one-day state mourning today for the Palestinians killed in recent Israeli attacks.

The cabinet division made the announcement in a notification issued on Thursday.

On the day, national flags will be hoisted at half mast atop offices of all government, semi-government, autonomous, educational institutions, and Bangladeshi missions abroad, it mentioned.

Besides, special prayers will be offered at all mosques after Friday prayers and other places of worship across the country for the departed and injured in Palestine, the notification added.

At least 4,137 people have been killed in the Gaza Strip since Israel began bombarding the Palestinian enclave, the Gaza health ministry said yesterday.

Rice price on rise Wholesalers in city blame millers; price up by Tk 1-3 per kg compared to last week

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinaipur

A month ahead of the Aman harvesting season, prices of rice have gone up by Tk 1 to 3 per kg over the last one week in the capital's kitchen markets.

Yesterday, coarse rice was being sold for Tk 56 a kg, up from Tk 54 a week ago, while fine rice was selling for Tk 65-80 a kg, depending on the quality.

Wholesalers claim that rice millers in different districts are charging higher prices. Millers, however, attributed the price hike to the increased price of paddy.

Traders and experts say the price of rice is still lower than the same period of last year. The prices of paddy usually remain high ahead of the Aman harvesting season.

Wholesaler Abbas Uddin, proprietor of Abbas Enterprise at Mohammadpur Krishi Market, said they were not having enough rice from millers over the last few days on the ground that there was a dearth of paddy supply.

"Once the price of rice starts to soar, big traders try to stock up on the staple. This results in further increase in prices."

He said a 50-kg sack of coarse rice like BR-28 and BR-29 was sold for Tk 2,550 to 2,650 yesterday, up from Tk 2,420 to 2,550 a week ago.

Prices of Miniket, Nazirshah and Gutti Swarna rice have also risen by Tk 1 per kg, Abbas said.

Retailer Abu Raihan Jaglu, owner of Matlab Rice Agency at Karwan Bazar, said prices of all varieties of rice have soared by Tk 1 to 3 per kg.

"We don't know why the price is rising. We have heard that there is no shortage of supply, but still the price is going up," said Raihan.

However, there was no reflection of this price hike in the market monitoring report uploaded on the food ministry's website.

According to the website data, the wholesale price of coarse rice was Tk 44 to 47 per kg while the retail price was Tk 48 to 52 per kg at the markets in the capital on Thursday.

Anwar Hossain, proprietor of retail shop Anwar Store at Dakshin Begunbari, said he used to buy each sack of BR-28 rice for Tk 2,400 a

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Australia's Mitchell Marsh celebrates with fellow opener David Warner after reaching his century during their 62-run win against Pakistan at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru yesterday. Warner smashed 163 while Marsh plundered 121 as Australia posted 367 before bowling out Pakistan for 305.

PHOTO: AFP

