

India to export 99,150 tonnes of onions to Bangladesh, 5 countries

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India has allowed export of 99,150 tonnes of onions to Bangladesh and five other countries.

State-owned National Cooperative Exports Limited (NCEL) will be the agency for export of the onions to the six countries, an official statement said yesterday.

The five other countries are the UAE, Mauritius, Bhutan, Bahrain and Sri Lanka.

The statement, however, did not specify the quantity of onions to be exported to each of the six countries.

Export of onion from India is banned in general. However, the Indian government allows shipments of specified quantities to friendly countries on their requests.

On December 8 last year, India banned the export of onion, a politically sensitive commodity in that country. The ban was extended earlier this year.

India is now in the midst of marathon parliamentary elections which will end on June 1.

Onion export from India was prohibited last year to ensure adequate domestic availability and tame the prices against the backdrop of estimated lower Kharif and Rabi crops in 2023-24 as compared to previous year and increased demand in the international market, said the statement by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.

NCEL, the agency for export of onion to the six countries, sourced domestic onions. The quota allocated for export to the six countries has been fixed as per requisition made by them.

As the largest producer of onion in India, Maharashtra state is the major supplier of onions sourced by NCEL for export.

Indian had also allowed the export of 2,000 tonnes of white onion cultivated specially for export markets in the Middle-East and some European countries. Being purely export-oriented, the production cost of the white onion is higher than other onions due to higher seed cost, adoption of good agricultural practice and compliance to strict maximum residue limits requirements.



Palestinian children stand amid the debris of a house destroyed by overnight Israeli bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFR

Hamas says studying new Israeli truce proposal

UK ship sets sail to help building of Gaza aid jetty; Israel strike on Lebanon kills 3

AFP, Jerusalem

Hamas said it was studying the latest Israeli counterproposal regarding a potential ceasefire in Gaza yesterday, a day after media reports said a delegation from mediator Egypt arrived in Israel in a bid to jump-start stalled negotiations.

The signs of fresh truce talks came alongside at least three Israeli air strikes during the night in Rafah, southernmost Gaza, according to an AFP correspondent.

Rafah is crowded with hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced by nearly seven months of war between Israel and the Islamist movement Hamas. Strikes in Rafah and elsewhere killed more than a dozen people overnight, hospital officials said.

"Today, the Hamas movement received the official Zionist occupation response to the movement's position, which was delivered to the Egyptian and Qatari mediators on April 13," Khalil al-Hayya, deputy head of Hamas's political arm in Gaza, said in a statement.

"The movement will study this proposal, and upon completion of its study, it will submit its response."

Hamas has previously insisted on a permanent ceasefire, something rejected by Israel.

Egypt, Qatar and the United States have been unsuccessfully trying to seal a new truce deal in Gaza ever since a one-week halt to the fighting in November saw 80 Israeli hostages exchanged for 240 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons.

A delegation from Egypt arrived in Israel on Friday hoping to revive the truce negotiations, Israeli and Egyptian media reported.

There has been "noticeable progress in bringing the views of the Egyptian and Israeli delegations closer", said Al-Qahera News, which is linked to Egyptian state intelligence services.

In early April, Hamas had said it was studying a proposal, after talks in Cairo, and Al-Qahera reported progress. Days later Israel and Hamas accused each other of undermining negotiations.

As talks drag on, dozens of people in Gaza die every day, according to figures from the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

School teacher stabbed to death by son

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A school teacher was stabbed to death by his teenage son at Konapara village in Bhaluka upazila of Mymensingh on Friday night.

Mujibur Rahman, 52, of Konapara village, was a senior assistant teacher at Mirka Hasina Banu Girls' High School in Bhaluka.

Quoting locals, Shah Kamal Akanda, officer-in-charge of Bhaluka Police Station, said Mujibur got into an argument with his son Rabbi, 17, a ninth grader, over a family dispute.

At one stage, Rabbi stabbed his father in the chest with a pair of compasses from his geometry set, injuring him critically around 8:00pm.

Locals rushed Mujibur to Bhaluka Upazila Health Complex where the doctors declared him dead.

On information, police recovered his body and sent it to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police detained Rabbi and interrogated him at the police station.

1 killed, 5 others hurt during post-match clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A man was stabbed to death while at least five others were injured in Brahmanbaria during a clash between two sides over bursting firecrackers after the final match of a local football tournament.

The incident took place in Narsingar village under Sadar upazila around 6:00pm on Friday. The deceased, Yakub Miah, 30, was a construction worker.

Brahmanbaria Sadar Model Police Station Officer in Charge (OC) Aslam Hossain said a case was filed over the incident against six people, including Tarek Islam.

Witnesses said that Tarek, who stabbed Yakub with a knife, is an MBBS doctor working at a private clinic in Brahmanbaria city.

The match was held in the afternoon between Narsingar Paschim Para Sporting Club and Uttar Para Tiger Sporting Club. Paschim Para Sporting Club won the game by 2-1 in the tie-breaker, leading the players and supporters of the champions to start celebrating with fireworks on the field.

While trying to stop the fireworks celebration, Din Islam Dilu, a resident of Uttar Para, got into an argument with Tarek Islam and his two brothers. At one stage of the heated exchange, Tarek took a knife and stabbed at least six people, including Yakub of Uttar Para.

The injured were taken to Brahmanbaria General Hospital, where the on-duty doctor at the emergency department declared Yakub dead.

Among the other injured, Kamal, 38, and Jewel Miah, 27, were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for better treatment.

On information, police went to the spot and brought the situation under control. The accused, Tarek, and his brothers are currently on the run.

Parents worried as schools reopen

FROM PAGE 1

announced these measures and timing to lower the impact of the heatwave on students, parents remain worried as the heat alert, issued by the Met office on Thursday, is in force till today, with no sign of the temperature getting lower.

Saiful Alam, a parent of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College student, voiced concerns about the intense heat potentially causing students to fall ill.

"Just wearing the school uniform in this heat will be a challenge," he said, talking about the difficulties students may face even before entering classrooms.

He further expressed worries about their well-beings during extended periods in overcrowded classrooms.

Shariful Islam Peash, another parent of Motiheed Ideal School and College student, echoed the sentiment.

"As a working parent, it's doubly challenging for me. How can I send my child to school in the morning heat and pick them up later in the afternoon when temperatures are higher?"

Fahmida Karim, a student of Ispahani Girls' School and College, recalled the struggles of the previous year. "Even with fans, classrooms become stuffy and uncomfortable."

It is difficult to focus on study in this heat, she added.

Ziaul Kabir Dulu, president of the Abhishabak Oikya Forum (Guardian Unity Forum), said that despite the persisting heatwave across the country, the government decided to reopen all

schools, colleges and madrasas.

"Young students are being forced to attend the schools with the heatwave still raging. Everyone is compelled to abide by the government's decision.

"If any student's life is endangered or any harm occurs anywhere in the country due to this decision, the government and the school authorities concerned will have to bear the responsibility," he said in a press release.

HEATWAVE IMPACT

A severe heatwave swept through the country last week with Chuadanga recording the highest temperature at 42.7 degrees Celsius, according to Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

Yesterday, the same district once again endured the highest temperature at 42.6 degrees Celsius, while Dhaka recorded 37.4 degrees Celsius.

Though Dhaka and Chuadanga saw a slight temperature decrease by 0.1 and 0.8 degrees Celsius respectively, the conditions remain unbearable for many.

Rahmat Ali, a van driver and resident of Uthli in Chuadanga's Jibannagar upazila, said, "In my 50 years of life, I've never experienced such intense heat. While driving, it felt as if my head was on fire."

Meanwhile, hospitals in Dhaka are witnessing a surge in patients from across the country presenting with various heat-related symptoms, including cold, cough, fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, headaches, sore throat, and

shortness of breath.

At the icddr hospital in Mohakhali, an average of 30 patients are being admitted per hour.

On Friday, 512 patients were admitted with diarrhoea-related issues. The day before, the figure was 568, according to hospital officials.

Prof Jahangir Alam, director of Dhaka Shishu Hospital and Institute, said children are getting dehydrated due to excessive sweating, adding that they are primarily being treated for complications related to pneumonia, cold, fever, cough, and asthma.

Meanwhile, commuters in areas like Gulistan, Paltan, Bangla Motor, Farmgate, and Karwan Bazar are resorting to using umbrellas and hand fans for relief, while juice and ice cream shops are seeing an increase in customers.

Nur-e-Alam, a rickshaw-puller in Bangla Motor, had to cut his working hours due to the heat, resulting in lower income, while Didar Hossain, a trader at Karwan Bazar, noted a thin presence of consumers since Eid, due to the heat.

Bazlur Rashid, a meteorologist at BMD, indicated that the current temperatures are expected to persist for three more days, with a possibility of slight increase.

"We are expecting rain in the north-eastern and north-southern regions, as well as Dhaka, from May 2," he said, adding rainfalls expected on May 3-4, would bring temperatures down.

LCs because of shortage of dollars. The IPPs have nothing to do with this problem. So, we are seeking help from our regulator [Power Division] and the customer [PDB]," he said.

Asked about the collection of arrear bills from the PDB, he said different IPPs have received different amounts against arrear bills. "The PDB was supposed to clear all the arrear bills until December last year."

This fiscal year, the government issued bonds worth Tk 10,599 crore to IPPs, according to Power Division data.

The power ministry officials earlier this month said about \$2 billion is needed in the current fiscal year to clear the dues of all the companies concerned and also for their working capital to supply uninterrupted electricity. Half of this \$2 billion would be spent on clearing dues of India's Adani Power and US energy giant Chevron, which is producing gas from Bibiyana, a major gas field in Bangladesh.

The rest of the amount will be used to pay the bills of purchasing liquid fuel, liquefied natural gas and coal for power generation.

Bargain bitumen failing to bear extreme heat

FROM PAGE 1

Road surface temperature tends to be 15-20C higher than ambient temperature because the dark asphalt absorbs heat and the vehicle wheels generate even more heat.

In Hadiuzzman's opinion, continued exposure to heat reduces bitumen's resilience, and after a certain time, it starts to melt at temperatures much lower than expected.

Both Hadiuzzman and Kazi Shifun Newaz, assistant professor at the Accident Research Institute (ARI) of Buet, have doubts about the quality of bitumen used on roads.

Contacted, Roads and Highways Department's Chief Engineer Syed Moinul Hasan said thin layers of bitumen used for temporarily fixing roads were probably causing the problem.

Abdul Monem Group's rejoinder and our reply

FROM PAGE 1

Revenue has suspended all imports and exports by Abdul Monem Group and its sister concerns, including Abdul Monem Sugar Refinery, over misuse of bond facilities and non-payment of applicable duty and fines worth Tk 674.35 crore. Abdul Monem Sugar Refinery and its management purviews the news to be inappropriate.

Abdul Monem Sugar Refinery Limited is a licensed bond facility holder. Since obtaining the bond license, the company has been conducting business operations in compliance with the bond license terms and has been contributing directly to the country's ongoing economic progress by providing an estimated revenue of around 1,700 crore taka to the government. Additionally, the sugar produced, which is an essential commodity for Bangladesh, plays a significant role in meeting the needs of the country and its people. AM Sugar Refinery Limited directly and indirectly provides employment for approximately 2,500 people.

During the past fiscal years 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022 the company has faced substantial financial losses due to the global pandemic COVID-19, immediately followed by the Russia-Ukraine war, international business downturn, and the current foreign currency crisis, high interest rate, and contractionary monetary policies. Furthermore, due to the requirement of providing 100% margin to open LC, additional funds were needed to be brought in from other businesses.

"We are not certain whether climate change has a massive impact here. We are assessing it," he said.

LACK OF PREPARATION

According to Prof Hadiuzzaman, also a former director of ARI, the road transport authorities are not prepared to tackle the adverse impact of climate change.

"If they were prepared, they would have chosen performance-based bitumen," he says, recommending the addition of polymer in bitumen for a higher melting point.

Roads are being damaged because the authorities did not conduct the research required, he says, adding that the authorities must bear in mind that climate change may increase the temperature further.

Although performance-based bitumen is costlier than 60/70 grade bitumen, the lifetime cost of such a

road is lower.

Concrete can also be chosen because of its lower maintenance cost.

The RHD has started using polymer-modified bitumen to repair Dhaka Chattogram highway and widen Dhaka-Sylhet highway, said its Chief Engineer Moinul.

The cost of polymer-modified bitumen is around 15/20 percent higher than the 60/70 grade bitumen.

Prof Hadiuzzman points out that construction workers need proper knowledge about polymer-modified bitumen and the authorities need facilities to test it.

There are 22,476km of roads under the RHD network. Of this, 3,991km are national highways, 4,897km regional highways and 13,558km district roads, according to the RHD's 2022-23 annual report.

based on the NBR order dated April 23, 2024, a previous investigation by the customs authorities as well as quotes from top customs and NBR officials. Available documentary evidence as well as confirmation by the officials clearly suggest the Group misused the bond facility and has unpaid duties and related fines that were slapped upon evidence of violation of customs rules concerning bond facilities.

An official of Abdul Monem Group, whom we quoted in our story, also acknowledged this.

The rejoinder contains a lot of unrelated information, but does not contradict our story. We stand by our report.

Murder suspect

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At one point, Babu told the accompanying policemen that he needed to go to the toilet. After returning from the toilet, Babu somehow managed to uncuff himself and flee the accompanying policemen.

Meanwhile, Munni confessed in court that she drugged her husband and handed him over to her lover Mamun, the official further said.

Police recovered Ali Matbar's body from a pond on Thursday and detained Babu and Munni on suspicion the next day.

Later that night, they were shown arrested in a murder case filed by Matbar's brother Karamat Ali at Shariatpur Sadar Police Station against unnamed people.

OUR RESPONSE

The Daily Star published the report