

Govt hunting for fuel worldwide

Asks US for waiver of sanctions on Russian petroleum products; looks for supplies from India, Malaysia, Nigeria, Australia, America

ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government is moving to diversify fuel imports as traditional shipping routes face disruption and fears of nationwide shortages grow amid escalating geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

With Iran's tight grip on the Strait of Hormuz, a conduit for roughly one-fifth of global oil trade, importing crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the Middle East has become a challenge.

With this in mind, the government has requested a sanctions waiver from the United States so that the country can purchase refined fuel from Russia without repercussions. At the same time, officials

Country's fuel imports to exceed 1 lakh tonnes in April

Govt considering issuing 'fuel passes' to stop panic buying, hoarding

Govt weighs austerity measures: extended weekends, remote work

are negotiating with a range of countries across Asia, Africa, and beyond to diversify fuel sources.

Dhaka wrote to Washington on March 22, requesting permission to import up to 6,00,000 tonnes of refined fuel from Russia or, alternatively, to obtain a waiver for at least two months, according to the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources.

"We held discussions with the US State Department and submitted the formal request following their advice. Now we are awaiting their response," said

Monir Hossain Chowdhury, the ministry spokesperson, during a briefing at the

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A blaze erupts after debris from an intercepted Iranian missile hit an industrial building and fuel tanker at Israel's Oil Refineries in Haifa yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh races to secure fertiliser amid Hormuz uncertainty

SUKANTA HALDER

The government is making urgent efforts to secure fertiliser, especially urea, from both regular and alternative sources to ensure food security and prevent any supply shortage after June amid the US-Israel war on Iran.

"We are seeking imports from multiple sources, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, while exploring options with Russia despite sanctions-related complications, as well as alternatives such as Brunei, Malaysia, and Vietnam..."

BCIC Chairman Md Fazlur Rahman

Amid instability caused by the war, serious doubts have arisen over whether the 17 listed suppliers can deliver fertiliser through the Strait of Hormuz. In response, the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) opened an international tender, inviting global suppliers to secure this vital agricultural input.

Contacted by The Daily Star, BCIC Chairman Md Fazlur Rahman said the urea tender was widened for international participation to address the ongoing emergency situation caused by global disruptions in fuel and gas supply, which have led to domestic factory shutdowns.

He said that while there is no supply shortage until June, the country requires a reserve of around 600,000 tonnes of urea for the July-September period, which cannot be met through local production due to gas shortages.

"We are seeking imports from multiple sources, including Saudi

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Tk 31,000cr in fuel subsidies needed till June

Says energy minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The additional import cost of fuel and liquefied natural gas due to the US-Israel war on Iran would require Tk 31,000 crore in subsidies between March and June, said Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources Minister Iqbal Hassan Mahmood Tuku yesterday.

The minister said diesel is currently being sold at Tk 100 per litre, while the actual cost was Tk 189 per litre between March 1 and 29. Octane is being sold at Tk 120 per litre, whereas the actual cost was Tk 150.72.

"The government is shouldering a significant subsidy in public interest," he said in parliament yesterday.

He said subsidy requirements for diesel between March and June could be Tk 15,409 crore, while octane Tk 636 crore. Besides, Petrobangla may need Tk 15,077 crore in LNG subsidies in the April-June quarter.

The minister said the government has kept domestic fuel prices stable despite the challenges, unlike many countries that have adjusted prices multiple times.

He urged the people to avoid unnecessary purchases, prevent waste,

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Iran dismisses 'unreasonable' US demands, says NPT under review

Trump threatens to 'take the oil' in Iran as crude surges

Israel oil refinery hit as Iran steps up attacks

Trump 'interested' in asking Arab allies to help pay for war

Trump threatens to 'obliterate' Iran's energy grid

Tells Tehran to reach deal immediately to open Strait of Hormuz; war rages on amid ground ops fear

AGENCIES

President Donald Trump yesterday warned that Iran's energy plants and oil wells would be obliterated if it did not open the Strait of Hormuz immediately, after Tehran described US peace proposals as "unrealistic" and fired waves of missiles at Israel.

Trump, a day after sounding conciliatory and suggesting a deal could be reached this week, issued an ominous warning yesterday.

"Great progress has been made but, if for any reason a deal is not shortly reached, which it probably will be, and if the Hormuz Strait is not immediately 'Open for Business,' we will conclude our lovely 'stay' in Iran by blowing up and completely obliterating all of their Electric Generating Plants, Oil Wells and Kharg Island (and possibly all desalination plants!), which we have purposefully not yet 'touched,'" Trump said.

Iran has previously threatened that if its key economic sites face further US and Israeli strikes, it will target the energy infrastructure of its oil and gas-rich Arab neighbours on the Gulf.

Market experts warned that any US ground operation or wider Iranian retaliation could send oil prices to levels not seen since the July 2008 commodity boom, when the cost of world benchmark crude Brent hit close to \$150 per barrel – and could rise far more.

Brent has already risen in price by nearly 60 percent this month, and the US benchmark WTI by more than half.

"If the US were to launch a ground invasion of Iran, ... projections of \$200 (a barrel) oil will not be an otherworldly supposition anymore," analyst Tamas Varga of PVM Energy said.

On Sunday night, the US president told

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All attackers of July activists to face action

Says Salahuddin, reiterates warning against mobs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said those involved in armed attacks against activists of the July uprising would be treated as criminals, irrespective of their uniform, and assured proper investigation of all cases and protection for July fighters.

He made the remarks while answering two separate supplementary questions in yesterday's parliamentary sitting.

To a question from BNP MP Zainul Abedin Farroque, Salahuddin said, "Those who carried out armed attacks against July fighters and ordinary people – whether they wore the uniform of any force, or were [from] Jubo League, Chhatra League – whoever they were, they are all criminals. Cases have been filed against them.

"If not, you may file them, and all cases will be properly investigated. The judiciary is responsible for delivering judgement."

National Citizen Party MP Akhtar Hossen asked whether the home ministry would take departmental action, beyond judicial investigations, against police officers involved in killings and torture over the past 16 years, particularly during the uprising, adding that the Awami League was using the frame of "police killings" to "create disorder".

In response, the home minister said July fighters are

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Humaira, an eight-month-old from Barishal, receives treatment for measles at the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Mohakhali, Dhaka, where she has been admitted for the past seven days. At least 40 children have died of measles and related complications this year as the disease spreads in the capital and several other districts. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

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SPECIAL VACCINE DRIVE

Measles vaccine age lowered to six months

Campaign to start in June-July

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The National Immunisation Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) yesterday recommended lowering the age for receiving the measles vaccine to six months, as one-third of the children recently infected with measles are under nine months, the current age for vaccination.

However, the measles vaccine for children aged six months to five years will be given only during a special vaccination campaign, expected to be held in June or July based on the availability of all logistics, said Halimur Rashid, director of disease control at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) and also a member of NITAG.

The age for routine measles vaccination will remain nine months.

The group also decided to investigate the recent surge in measles cases to determine whether the cases originated within the country or not and has assigned the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR)