

Fuel queues snake

FROM PAGE 12
— around 25 percent higher
— is set to begin today.

During yesterday's visits, correspondents saw motorcyclists waiting four to eight hours for fuel, while cars queued for 10 to 14 hours.

At 5:00pm, a winding line of motorcycles outside Sonar Bangla Filling Station in Asad Gate stretched along Asad Avenue, crossed Mohammadpur Town Hall and reached Al-Amin Jame Mosque on Shahjahan Road.

"I'm getting fuel after nearly nine and a half hours. The entire day is gone," said Md Suman Mia, a ride-sharing driver. "My income is falling. It feels like I spend 15 days working and 15 days just standing in fuel lines."

He said a fuel pass now would allow him to receive Tk 1,000 worth of fuel at a time, compared to Tk 500 previously.

Another motorcyclist said he had queued from 4:00pm on Friday, only for fuel to run out at 11:00pm. "Two full days wasted," he said.

At nearby Talukder Filling and Servicing

Centre, fuel had yet to arrive, but motorcycle queues had already stretched to Zia Uddin, while car queues extended past the Parliament's LD Gate towards Khamarbari.

Near the front of the line, Syed Rumman Alam, a private-sector employee, said he took leave from work and joined the queue at 7:00am, only to learn fuel would not be available before evening.

Still, he waited, having already visited at least seven stations earlier in the day without success. His bike was also running near empty.

Similar scenes were observed at Tejgaon's Southern and Satata pumps, Paribagh's Meghna and Purbachal stations, and the Ramna pump near Matsya Bhaban, where queues weaved through key roads and intersections.

As of yesterday, diesel stock stood at 101,784 tonnes, enough for around 10 days. Petrol stock was about 18,800 tonnes — sufficient for more than two weeks of demand, with local production continuing as expected, officials said.

48hrs after teacher

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under Munshipara Police Station in Kurigram.

Nazmul said she had married decades ago but was later divorced. She had no children and maintained little contact with her family.

She occupied one room of a three-room flat, while another family lived in the remaining two rooms as sub-tenants, said one of her neighbours, Md Milon. The family had gone to their village home early Thursday and returned on Friday afternoon, he added.

Abdul Mannan, a security guard at the building, said Firoza gave private tuition at various houses in addition to her teaching job. She usually left home every morning and returned around 10:00pm.

When she did not leave the house even after 10:30am on Friday, the guard went to check on her. Finding the door open, he informed local resident

Mohiuddin, and they entered the flat and found her lying on her bed in a pool of blood.

On information, Pallabi police went to the scene. The Crime Scene Unit of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) also collected evidence.

Alamgir Jahan, officer-in-charge of Pallabi Police Station, told The Daily Star that the incident likely took place in the early hours of Friday.

"The door was open. It is highly likely the killer was someone known to her, as she would not normally open the door to a stranger at that hour," he said.

The victim's brother, Nazmul Azam, filed a murder case with Pallabi Police Station.

Sub-Inspector Al-Amin, the investigating officer, said: "Despite collecting evidence from the scene and reviewing nearby CCTV footage, we have not been able to identify any suspects yet."

Punish those

FROM PAGE 3
Public health expert and DPPH convening committee member Mushtaq Husain read out their keynote paper.

He said the current measles situation is a serious public health crisis that has exposed weaknesses in the healthcare system and gaps in vaccination coverage.

Citing data from the DGHS, he said 206 children died from measles and measles-like symptoms between March 15 and April 16 this year. "These deaths could have been prevented if timely and effective measures had been taken," he added.

Of them, 34 cases were confirmed through laboratory tests, while the rest showed symptoms consistent with the disease. More than 20,000 people have been infected so far, with over 3,000 currently undergoing treatment in hospitals, he also said.

"We believe that negligence in vaccine procurement by the previous interim government, bureaucratic delays, and institutional indifference towards public health have contributed to this outbreak and weakened the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI). Those responsible for these preventable child deaths must be identified and held accountable," he said.

Replying to a query, he said a measles epidemic is currently underway in the country, whether the government acknowledges it or not.

"We are seeing the government take various emergency measures. However, it may be refraining from declaring

measles a public health emergency, possibly out of concern that it could create panic among people or have political consequences," he added.

Replying to another query, he said since the government has started mass vaccination, the rising trend of measles cases may decline within one and a half months, adding that the number of deaths, however, may take another month to come down.

AMZakir Hussain, former director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), said in previous years, three out of every 1,000 measles patients died in the country, but this time the number has risen to 10.

"The government must conduct a thorough analysis to identify the reasons behind the increased death rate," he added.

DPPH Convener Prof Mahub E-Rashid said Bangladesh had been performing well in controlling communicable diseases, with the main concern shifting to the rise of non-communicable diseases.

However, the country has faltered in controlling communicable diseases like measles, attributing the situation to negligence by those concerned, he added.

PRAYER TIMING	
APRIL 19	
Fazr	Zohr
AZAN 4:35	12:45
Asr	4:45
Maghrib	6:24
Esha	7:45
JAMAAT 5:10	1:15
5:00	6:28
8:15	

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Trade deal with US

FROM PAGE 12
to import-dependent energy strategies to serve vested interests, leading to the import of LNG instead of domestic gas exploration.

Institutions like the state-owned Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company (BAPEX) were weakened.

There were major irregularities in energy imports, Bhattacharya said.

The government has formed a cabinet committee on energy security, but it should inform the public about its activities through transparency and bring the matter for discussion in the national parliament.

Although the government has spoken about forming a reform commission in line with its electoral promises, it has

not yet been made visible. The government should clearly disclose its plans for reforms in public financial management, revenue collection and incentives, Bhattacharya added.

While moderating the programme, Hassan Ahamed Chowdhury Kiron, chairman of Debate for Democracy, said that due to past corruption, Bangladesh failed to achieve self-reliance in energy.

Import dependence was increased for vested interests, while domestic production was neglected.

Therefore, ensuring energy security will be a major challenge for the government in the upcoming budget, he said.

The upcoming budget must reflect the expectations of ordinary

BNP nears final list of women

FROM PAGE 12
made to the party and their constituencies, and what roles they had played in political movements over the years.

They were also asked about their priorities if elected, their previous experience as public representatives, whether they would support the party's final nominee, and what they would do if denied nomination.

Senior BNP leaders said the party was trying to maintain a balance between long serving and loyal women leaders and younger aspirants who could bring fresh energy and ideas to politics.

They said that Tarique, during the interviews, instructed the party's aspirants to accept the BNP's final decision and avoid any action that could undermine party discipline.

Among senior BNP figures under discussion are Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal President Afroza Abbas and Mohila Dal General Secretary Sultana Ahmed, who was a reserved-seat lawmaker in 2001.

Others being considered include former reserved-seat lawmakers Rehana Akter, Bilkis Islam, Rasheda Begum Hira, Newaz Halima Arly and Helen Zerir Khan.

BNP central committee member Shirin Sultana, a former reserved-seat lawmaker in 1996, is also among the aspirants, along with Dhaka district BNP General Secretary Nipun Roy Chowdhury.

BNP Chairperson's Adviser and singer Baby Naznin and Mayer Daak Coordinator Sanjida Islam Tulee are also being discussed, according to party insiders.

Among leaders linked to the 2008 reserved seats, BNP Assistant Secretary for Local Government Affairs Shammi Akter and Assistant Secretary for Human Rights Affairs Syeda Ashifa Ashrafi Papia are also under consideration.

Meanwhile, Jamaat leaders said the party's women's central committee has already finalised a list of nominees, prioritising those considered capable of playing an effective role in parliament and meeting public expectations.

Party sources said Jamaat was also giving importance to women leaders from areas where it failed to win general seats, so that those regions could still have representation in parliament. It has also decided not to nominate family members of its current lawmakers.

Caught between arsenic

FROM PAGE 3
Parvin Begum, a housewife from Chandlai, said she could use tap water only for washing clothes.

"We cannot even rinse our mouths with this water. It's too salty and leaves my hands with blisters as I use it for domestic chores. We have to bring drinking water from far away," she said.

Mohammad Ali of the same area said the water comes from a very deep layer, so it is warm and salty. "Bathing with it leaves the body feeling itchy," he added.

Many others, including students, workers and families across the municipality, expressed similar frustrations.

Prof Chowdhury Sarwar Jahan of RU's Geology and Mining department explained that the salinity found in the area reflects ancient geological conditions.

He also said northern and north-western Bangladesh consist of two types of geological formations: the

uplifted Barind Tract and sediment-filled floodplains.

"However, millions of years ago, the sea extended much farther inland than it does today. What is now Chapainawabganj was once situated near a coastline. As the sea retreated over time, salt deposits remained trapped underground," he said.

He added that such saline water is extremely harmful to health. "Toufikul Islam, executive engineer of Chapainawabganj municipality, said water is usually drawn from 120 ft wells at 24 locations across the town. The three ultra-deep wells, around 1,000 feet deep and installed in wards 8 and 13, are yielding saline and warm water.

"Except for parts of wards 1, 3, and 4, most other areas also have issues with iron and arsenic contamination," he said. "We often need to test 20-25 sites before identifying a viable source. In the affected wards, we

could not find arsenic-free water at regular depths, so we relied on those three ultra-deep wells."

He also said the municipality continues operating the ultra-deep wells to temporarily ease acute water shortages during peak demand. "Treating saline water is extremely expensive, so we have no such plan yet. We are now working on a project to treat river water and supply it to the affected zones."

Amit Kumar Sarkar, executive engineer at DPHE in Chapainawabganj, said the ultra-deep pumps were initially meant to explore clean groundwater sources but later proved unsuitable.

"Later, we installed five more test wells in the district outside the municipality, and their salinity was within acceptable limits. This means the problem exists only in specific zones," he said. "We are working to find alternative solutions to address the issue."

Zero malaria

FROM PAGE 12
Halimur Rashid, director (disease control) of DGHS, however, said they were on track to achieve the malaria elimination target.

In 2022, the national malaria elimination programme under DGHS had prepared "National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination and Prevention of Re-establishment of Malaria Transmission in Bangladesh 2024-2030".

The strategy aimed at attaining zero mortality due to indigenous malaria by 2027 and eliminating malaria by 2030.

"Bangladesh has demonstrated significant progress in reducing the malaria caseload over the years, although fluctuations are reported in terms of upsurges in 2014, 2019 and again in 2022," reads the executive summary of the strategy.

MA Faiz, former director general of DGHS, however, said that achieving both targets will be very challenging given the current situation.

Around 12 lakh Rohingya people are living in camps in Cox's Bazar, many of whom travel to hilly areas outside the camps and become infected with malaria.

Many of them are not aware of the risks of malaria and often seek diagnosis late, increasing the risk of transmission in Teknaf and Ukhia.

Besides, the four districts with the highest malaria burden share borders with neighbouring countries, meaning elimination efforts will also depend on controlling the disease across the border, he told this correspondent yesterday.

Funding for malaria control has shrunk globally as well as in the country, posing another challenge.

"Besides, we presumed that our 51 districts are malaria-free, but to achieve elimination, we have to prove this scientifically with evidence," he added.

NCP forms

FROM PAGE 3
Aranya Chowdhury, named as a joint member secretary, said she had already decided to become inactive in the party before the election.

"I am surprised to see my name on the Jatiya Nari Shakti central committee. I have no involvement with this committee; I have resigned from all NCP posts and submitted my resignation letter," she wrote in a Facebook post yesterday.

Dyuti previously served as NCP's northern region organiser and a senior joint member secretary of its youth wing, Jatiya Jubo Shakti.

Contacted, Mahmuda Mitu said they were unaware of Dyuti's decision to leave the party.

"We received her name from Jubo Shakti and assumed they had spoken to her. That is why we did not reconfirm it," she said.

Ignore people

FROM PAGE 12
Islam urged the government to immediately accept and implement the referendum verdict "while there is still time".

"Barely two months into assuming office, extortion has resumed. People are fed up with the harassment. You yourselves are creating mobs from within the ruling party, indirectly provoking the people."

He also called on the government to make an announcement in parliament about initiating constitutional reforms and implement the referendum verdict.

"Those of us who are in the Jatiya Sangsad will cooperate. Otherwise, be prepared to face protests in the days ahead," Azhar warned.

"People of Bangladesh know how you came to power. They are well aware of the extent to which you manipulated election results in various constituencies... The ground beneath your feet has begun to slip away. Understand the language of the people. Do not force them to take to the streets in protest. If the people do come out to the streets, they will not leave until their demands are met, Inshallah."

Urging activists of the alliance to mobilise people, he said, "If the government does not accept our demands, we will compel it to do so through peaceful means. In the meantime, we will continue to play our role in parliament and intensify the movement on the streets."

Also speaking at the rally, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General and alliance coordinator Hamidur Rahman Azad said the government's conduct suggests little has changed in Bangladesh since August 5, 2024.

"It does not appear that

Sheikh Hasina has fled to India or that fascism has fallen. Her government was anti-people, and the current one is also heading in the same direction.

"In the past, Sheikh Hasina tried to suppress us with counter programmes but failed before the power of the people. If the current government resorts to repression using state machinery like a fascist regime, people will resist unitedly and realise their demands."

Nasiruddin Patwari, chief coordinator of the National Citizen Party (NCP), alleged that the government has established "Zia-tantra" instead of democracy.

"They have taken control of our banks, parliament, and the Anti-Corruption Commission. Leaders of the 11-party alliance are being attacked in different places. The people, who voted with certain expectations, are now being made to stand in queues with empty buckets."

Earlier in the day, Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman criticised the government by saying allocations for the Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute are inadequate amid rising concern over the disease.

Speaking to reporters after visiting the hospital in Dhaka's Shyamoli yesterday, Shafiqur said the facility's annual government allocation had been reduced from Tk 30 crore to Tk 28 crore. "Of that, only Tk 7 crore has been released in the first quarter, which is insufficient to operate the 700-bed hospital."

Later, after visiting a petrol pump in Asadgate, Shafiqur urged the government to disclose accurate information on fuel supplies, saying that delivering false information in the Jatiya Sangsad is "unfortunate and shameful for the nation".

Dhaka-EU ties set

FROM PAGE 3
Bangladesh is the first LDC with which the EU is signing the CPA.

The country's exports to the EU rose from \$2 billion in 2000-01 to over \$26 billion in 2024, and the duty-free facility that the EU has been providing for Bangladeshi goods under the 'Everything but Arms' scheme will be phased out in 2029.

After that, the EU will have Generalized System of the Preferences (GSP) Plus, and Bangladesh will have to implement a variety of UN conventions related to good governance, environment, and labour rights to have duty-free access under GSP Plus.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh has been part of EU's Global Gateway Initiative, under which the country can get funding for renewable energy projects. The EU also made Bangladesh part of its Talent Partnership, under which a skilled workforce can migrate to the EU countries.

Bangladesh has also been drawing close attention from the EU, being a country located in the Indo-Pacific region, as well as being among the countries most affected by climate change.

"The CPA is a foundational agreement. We will have different joint committees on various sectors, including trade, investment, environment, labour, etc.," said a foreign ministry official.

The official also said once the CPA is signed, Bangladesh will seek to sign a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and an investment protection agreement.

"We would like our exports to the EU protected and also ensure protection of European investments in Bangladesh," he said.

Bangladesh's former ambassador to the EU in Brussels, Mahub Hasan Saleh, said under the Cooperation Agreement of 2001, the Economic Relations Division (ERD) was the lead agency when it comes to dealing with the EU.

With the signing of the CPA, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will become the lead agency, and the relations will be based on equal footing, he added.

Saleh also said Bangladesh and EU have a variety of areas to boost cooperation, including renewable energy, clean technology, improving value chains, and standardisation of products.

3&4

BEDROOM APARTMENTS

at Bashunthara Residential Area

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