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Blanket Arrest AL lawmakers blast govt at JS body meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) lawmakers yesterday blasted the government for harassing the innocent people by 'blanket arrest' and abusing the Speedy Trial Act against the opposition activists.

At a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on the home ministry, the AL lawmakers gave a note of dissent to a bill proposing time extension of the Speedy Trial Act.

Responding to the allegation by the opposition lawmakers, State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar said no innocent person has been arrested or harassed. He described the 'mass arrest' as one of the routine activities by the law enforcers to improve law and order.

In reply, the opposition members said they could place numerous instances of innocent being harassed by police.

AL lawmakers Mohammad Nasim and Sheikh Helal at the meeting demanded the government immediately repeal the Speedy Trial Act for the benefit of the people. The meeting, however, approved the bill.

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Gas price issue finally left to policymakers

Tata to send revised investment proposal within 15 days after prolonged deadlock in talks

JASIM UDDIN KHAN and SHARIER KHAN

The six-month long negotiation between Tata and the government on the Indian giant's \$2.5 billion investment proposal formally concluded yesterday without any positive results, leaving the matter up to the policymakers to decide.

The negotiators did not agree on gas price, sovereign guarantee for gas supply and committing certain gas fields for Tata, among many issues.

Sources however said these differences are not the hindrances. "There is a lack of political will in the negotiations," said one source.

The only consensus reached at the two-day negotiation is that the government will provide gas field reserve certificates to Tata.

Tata Sons Executive Director Alan Rosling said in the light of the differences in the last six months of negotiation, Tata will send a revised proposal package to the negotia-

tors in the next 15 days.

"We will then forward the Tata proposal in details to the policymakers for their decision," said Energy Adviser Mahmudur Rahman at a joint press briefing at Sonargaon Hotel yesterday.

"Finally, it will be up to the policymakers to decide whether the investment will be made or not."

When contacted, a policymaker said the top tier of the government is unwilling to accept Tata's gas price offer of less than one dollar per thousand cubic feet and a 20-year sovereign guarantee for gas supply.

Tata's conditions carry political risks in the context of the next general election, which is less than a year away. In the past, the Kafco agreement was signed giving the Japanese investors undue low gas price and it triggered cases at the High Court. Besides, the country does not yet have adequate infrastructure to instantly reciprocate

many aspects of Tata's proposals, the policymaker pointed out.

"If Tata wants to invest in Bangladesh, it has to consider the realities so that we can take a positive decision," he said.

Mahmudur Rahman said the government firmly believes secure gas supply issue is not separate from the price issue. "Both parties should consider this matter. If Tata needs secure gas supply security, they have to pay higher price. If they exclude this issue, we will set a reasonable price for our gas."

The government team negotiated as per suggestions of consultants of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), he mentioned.

"The ADB had earlier suggested the government should set a price protecting the interest of the country. And we negotiated accordingly," the energy adviser said, appreciating professionalism of the government negotiators.

Alan Rosling however said Tata

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TRISHAL BIGOTS Amnesty asks govt to protect Ahmadiyyas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amnesty International (AI) has urged the government to take immediate action to protect the Ahmadiyya community of Dhanikhola in Trishal upazila under Mymensingh district.

The AI concern followed International Khatme Nabuwat Movement's recent announcement to organise a rally to place a

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US renews pledge to help fight terrorism

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The United States has reiterated its support for Bangladesh in the fight against terrorism.

"We stand with the Bangladesh government in their fight against terrorism. We believe it's a common fight for us all," said US State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack during daily press

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ENVIRONMENT POLLUTION 37.5pc factories lack waste management

62pc don't recycle waste, survey finds

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

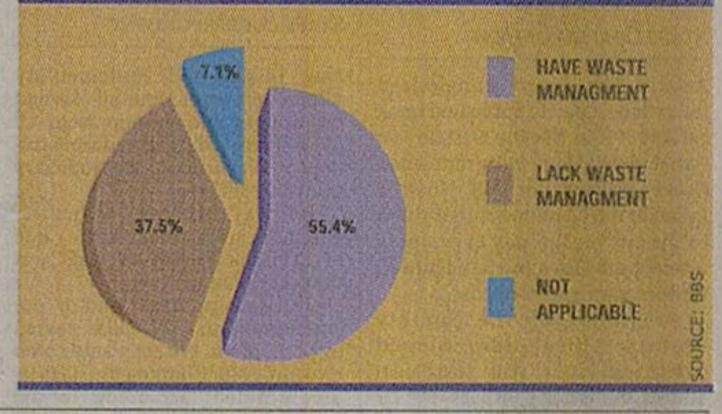
At least 37.5 percent of the country's industrial units do not have waste management system and 62.1 percent lack waste recycling facilities resulting in immense environmental pollution, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) says in a survey report.

The survey titled 'Environmental Protection Expenditure Survey 2005' said, "The environment is emerging as an important issue throughout the world. In Bangladesh, industries/establishments are not yet fully conscious about the problem. Government monitoring and supervision system is not very extensive."

The BBS for the first time carried out such a survey, assisted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The survey focussed on environment protection system in industrial units and their expenditure for this. The BBS initially selected 900 industrial units and

WASTE MANAGEMENT AT INDUSTRIAL UNITS



MASS ARREST Double trouble for the poor victims

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The plight of hundreds of relatives of the mass arrest victims continue due to the slow pace of release of the detainees, who have been granted bail, from the Dhaka Central Jail.

The jail authority released 400 detainees yesterday; with this, 1,448 people were released up to 8:00pm yesterday during the last four days.

Finding no shelter, the relatives, mostly poor, have been spending the nights under the open sky at the jail gate.

Many relatives were found staring at the jail entrance, standing under the sun, with hopes that the next person coming out of the jail might be their dear one. Many were seen waiting with notes of the bail order issued even back on February 6.

Talking to the relatives waiting at the jail gate, it was found that mostly poor people were the victims of the blanket arrest ahead of the 14-party opposition combine's long march to Dhaka last February 5. Almost all of the victims are rickshaw-pullers, wayside vendors, tailors, garage

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Relatives wait anxiously in front of Dhaka Central Jail gate for release of their near and dear ones detained during the 'blanket arrest' ahead of the opposition's February 5 long march. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon.

Rab seizes bomb making materials, explosives from city JMB den

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered bombs, explosives and bomb-making chemicals and materials from a den of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) at Lalbagh in the capital yesterday morning.

The recovery includes three handmade bombs, some

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2 Britons funded JMB to carry out bomb attacks

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER and SHAMIM ASHRAF

Two British citizens in June last gave £10,000 to Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) chief Abdur Rahman to carry out bomb attacks in Bangladesh, arrested JMB top guns Ataur Rahman Sunny and Abdul Awal confessed to two Dhaka magistrates yesterday.

The money was spent for buying explosive materials, making bombs and exploding them across the country, Sunny, younger brother of Abdur Rahman and military commander of the banned Islamist militant outfit, told Metropolitan Magistrate Jahangir Alam. Sunny identified the two British citizens as Sajjad

and Ataur Rahman, saying, "They are leaders of a London-based Islamic militant organisation."

He also admitted to killing judges, lawyers, policemen and common people by launching bomb attacks in a number of districts from October to December 2005 as commanded by Abdur Rahman and Siddiqi Islam alias

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No election if govt denies reforms

Say 14-party leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The leaders of Awami League-led 14-party alliance yesterday said they will not allow any election if the ruling alliance refuses to carry out the opposition-proposed reforms in the caretaker government and electoral systems.

Awami League (AL) will soon return to parliament to table the proposals for reforms, they reiterated, addressing a rally at city's

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CARETAKER, EC REFORMS AL will not place proposals thru' bill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) will place the reform proposals for the caretaker government system and the Election Commission (EC) not in the form of a bill but through the speech of the leader of the opposition in parliament.

The AL wants the government to agree with the proposals and place

a bill in the House.

A meeting of the AL Central Working Committee yesterday took the decision. It did not fix the date of joining the House but sources in the main opposition party said the AL lawmakers are likely to return to parliament on Sunday.

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina in her speech will outline

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Int'l coal firms term the policy 'too restrictive'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International coal companies at a workshop in the city yesterday termed Bangladesh Coal Policy (draft) too restrictive and not sufficiently driven by market forces, which they said would not attract foreign and private investment in coal mining in the country.

But local coal experts and energy ministry adviser Mahmudur Rahman stressed that

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New coal policy eyes higher royalty, environment safety

SHARIER KHAN

A new coal policy, now undergoing revisions, will seek a flexible higher royalty from mine developers, bond from them for environment protection and make it mandatory for them to set up at least one power plant near a mine.

Side by side, the government is formulating an attractive financial incentive package for mine developers.

Unlike the existing coal policy, the new one accommodates open cut mining and recognises the need to export coal to ensure faster return of investment. The policy however makes it mandatory that developers sell one third of the coal production locally and export the rest in the initial period and fifty-

fifty afterwards.

It also emphasises development of the railroads in the western region of the country and developing a deep-sea port near Mongla to facilitate bulk transport and export of coal.

The draft of the policy, likely to be finalised within six weeks, ambitiously targets achieving 10-15

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Hanif suffers heart attack at rally, in critical state

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Dhaka City Corporation mayor and also the city unit Awami League (AL) President Mohammad Hanif was admitted to Birdem Hospital after suffering a heart attack yesterday afternoon.

Hanif fell down on the podium while addressing a 14-party opposition demonstration at city's Muktangan at about 5:30pm. He was taken to the cardiac centre of Birdem Hospital immediately.

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