

OIL PRICE HIKE
Ballot backlash
fear may put
it off

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Amid a well-founded insistence of the World Bank, IMF and ADB to raise the oil prices to match the global ones, the government is on the horns of a dilemma of whether or not to go for the hike, fearing an electoral backlash.

Although the government policymakers have recently been mulling an oil price hike, a signal coming from the highest executive level indicates there is little or no chance of it happening under the present regime, said an energy ministry source.

The finance ministry is going to send a package proposal to the prime minister, recommending increasing the oil prices in three phases to make it tolerable for the consumers, a ministry source said.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

FUEL PRICE HIKE
**IMF team seeks
Hasina's support**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For the first time, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF) mission yesterday met Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina apparently to woo her support in raising fuel prices.

The five-member IMF mission led by Thomas R Rumbaugh, advisor for Asia and Pacific Department, tried to convince the Awami League (AL) of the urgent need for increasing oil prices and serious predicaments if the prices are not hiked.

Following the 90-minute meeting, AL advisory council member AMA Muhiit told The Daily Star, "Though they (IMF team) did not directly ask for our support, they raised the issue of adjusting fuel prices again and again. Well, you can say they lobbied with us and we have told them our position regarding this."

Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, AL presidium member, told the press that they (AL) have discussed the issue of raising oil prices. "We have clarified our position and said oil prices be fixed or changed logically keeping in view interests of the farmers and the poor."

In 2003, Bangladesh signed the PRGF arrangement with the IMF, and under it the IMF would provide PRGF loan in seven instalments. The IMF has already given five instalments. Before releasing each instalment, the IMF sends a review mission and upon its satisfaction that Bangladesh has fulfilled all the conditions set releases the instalment.

The present mission came to Dhaka towards the end of the last month to take stock of things before releasing the sixth instalment.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

2 killed in 'shootouts' with Rab

STAR REPORT

Two criminals, including an outlaw, were killed in separate incidents of shootouts with Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police in the capital and Jhenidah early yesterday.

Raju Ahmed alias Killer Raju, 25, of old Kachukhet area in the capital was killed during a shootout with Rab at Mirpur.

Rab-4 arrested Raju at Tongi College on Sunday night and took him to Sher-e-Bangla Primary School compound at Mirpur at about 3:30am to nab his accomplices. Sensing the presence of Rab, SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



A Nagarik Committee 2006 delegation meets NBR Chairman Khairuzzaman Chowdhury yesterday at his office. The delegation includes former finance minister M Syeduzzaman, Laila Kabir, Debapriya Bhattacharya, Mahmudul Islam and ASM Shahjahan.

KANSAT KILLINGS
Govt to pay
Tk 83 lakh as
compensation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The government will pay Tk 83 lakh as compensations to 728 victims and their families following the Kansat unrest in Chapainawabganj.

A three-member committee yesterday made a list of the victims of police excess and the injured people, official sources said.

Families of the 17 people killed in police firing would get Tk 2 lakh each and one person who was blinded will get Tk 1 lakh.

Ten seriously injured victims would get Tk 50,000 each, 100 SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



The gangway to a jetty for passenger launches on the much-publicised city circular waterway near the bridge at Amin Bazar is lying unused. Floating people now sleep on the gangway as the waterway inaugurated amid fanfare was partly operational only for a few weeks.

Transport strike called off

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Transport strike was called off in the remaining six districts of southwestern region yesterday, ending untold sufferings of the commuters.

The districts are Pirojpur, Patuakhali, Barisal, Jhalakathi, Borguna and Bagerhat. Earlier, the strike was withdrawn from seven other districts.

Road transport owners and workers associations enforced the non-stop transport strike on 175 routes of 13 southwestern districts from May 3 demanding cancellation of state-run BRTC bus services on these routes.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Help prevent use of black money in polls

Nagorik Committee 2006, formed as part of a civil society initiative for accountable development, discussed yesterday with high officials of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) ways to prevent use of undeclared money in the next general election.

A five-member delegation of the committee met NBR Chairman Khairuzzaman Chowdhury and urged him to take steps so that the candidates are required to get their wealth statements certified by NBR before submitting them to the Election Commission (EC).

As an alternative they suggested that NBR should take an initiative to have access to the wealth statements submitted to EC, to scrutinise them. NBR Member ASM Zahir Mohammad was present during the discussion.

The committee delegation also suggested that NBR should take a co-ordinated effort to monitor use of undeclared money in the general election.

Former finance minister also joint-convenor of the committee M Syeduzzaman led the delegation that included joint-convenor Laila Kabir, former member of a care taker government ASM Shahjahan, former attorney general Mahmudul Islam and eminent economist Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya.

Responding to the delegation's call the NBR chairman said they are ready to take such initiatives if the EC wishes. "Then NBR would form a task force and scrutinise the wealth statements of the major candidates in each constituency," he said.

At least ten candidates in each constituency could be under such a scrutiny, he observed.

Regarding procurement of expensive cars by the members of parliament under the government's duty free facilities, the NBR chairman informed the delegation that the board already checked some cases and collected revenues after detecting anomalies.

"We discussed how to reduce influence of black money in the SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Another case filed against chief whip's son

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another criminal case was filed against Aktar Hamid Paban, younger son of Chief Whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain, with the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate on May 4.

Complainant Mohammad Soheli, a resident of Armanitola in Kotwali, in the first information report (FIR) said the accused had been threatening him with death for not joining his terrorist group for illegal activities.

Terming Paban an extortionist and a drug peddler, Soheli said the accused using his father's influence implicated him and two of his friends in a false case and sent him to jail on April 28 with the help of a dishonest police official for refusing to support his activities.

After he got out of jail on bail, Paban again asked him to join his group threatening to implicate him in an arms case.

On May 1, Paban went to the complainant's confectionery shop, at Govind Das Lane and pointing a gun threatened him with death if he failed to join him. Since then, the accused has been giving death SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

BSF kills 1
UNB, Dhaka

Border Security Force (BSF) of India gunned down a Bangladeshi youth and abducted two others in Thakurgaon and Chapainawabganj yesterday.

In Thakurgaon, the Indian border guards opened fire on two Bangladesh farmers-- Harun-ur-Rashid, 30, and Abdul Mannan, 35--when they were working on their croplands along Harinmari border

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Thai court declares polls null and void

Orders new election

ANN/ THE NATION

Thailand's Constitution Court has invalidated the controversial April election and ordered a new election to be held, Court's Secretary General Paiboon Warahapaihoon said.

The ruling came after two groups of people filed complaints with the Constitution Court, alleging that the election was unconstitutional.

Eight of the court's 14 judges voted that the polls had been unconstitutional for a variety of reasons, such as the manner in which the ballot booths were placed in a way to compromise voting privacy. Six other judges said the election was conducted properly.

The court also voted 9-5 that a new election should be held, Paiboon said at a press conference.

In past cases, Pan had repeatedly voted in favour of the government of Caretaker Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Meanwhile, leading opposition party, the Democrats, who boycotted the April 2 polls, said they are now ready to contest a new election.

"We are preparing for the new election, but we still have no details on the election day," said Democrat spokesman Ong-art Klampaiboon.

The complaints -- filed by a Thammasat University law lecturer and the People's Network for Elections, a Thai watchdog -- argued that the April 2 date was chosen unfairly, that the winners were improperly certified, and that the ruling party had financed SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Gaibandha by-polls today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

The by-election of Gaibandha-4 constituency will be held today at 102 polling stations.

The candidates are Shameen Kaiser Linkon of BNP, Abul Kalam Azad of Nagarik Committee, Lutfar Rahman Chowdhury of Jatiya Party and independent candidates Ataur Rahman Belal, Dulal Uddin and Sadek Ali. The candidates' campaign has however ceased since midnight Sunday.

The Gobindaganj constituency consists of one municipality, 17 unions and two lakh 94 thousand 227 voters.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



The three fishing cat cubs found in a tea estate in Tetulia return to the wild yesterday.

Captured fishing cat cubs freed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The three captive fishing cat cubs were released in the wilderness at Bhutipukur yesterday morning.

In presence of Panchagarh forest officials and local elites, the cats were returned back to their mother around 7:30am,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Prayer Timing

May 9

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-34	6-38
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Kamal accuses govt of politicising administration, police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Oikya Mancha (JOM) President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said the ruling alliance has politicised the civil administration, law enforcement agencies and other state owned machinery to rig the next general elections.

He was addressing a rally jointly organised by JOM, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) and Bangladesh Tarikat Federation (BTF) at Sher-e-Bangla Stadium at Mirpur protesting the 'fake' voter list and price hike of essentials and demanding uninterrupted supply of electricity and water.

By politicising the state bodies indiscriminately, the government has violated law of the land and also the constitution, he added.

Terming the new voter list as anti-constitutional, Dr Kamal, also the president of Gono Forum, said election commission has made the list to help the BNP-Jamaat coalition government win the election.

The BNP-Jamaat coalition would not be able to win even by rigging elections, as they have failed to fulfil the basic demands of the people, he further said.

He described the alliance government as an 'evil axis' and said their hunger for money is infinite and that's why they have been looting crores of taka from different public projects.

Dr Kamal urged the people of the country to be united against the SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

