



Ministers' house rent raised by over 150 pc

Government in Parliament yesterday tabled a bill providing for more than 150 per cent increase in house rent for ministers living in their own houses with retrospective effect from July 1991, reports UNB.

Criticising the bill, more than a dozen members from the opposition said raising financial benefits of the ministers when sufferings of the people had increased is an act of 'public immorality'. Frequent increase in benefits to the ministers and MPs have evoked dissatisfaction among and criticism from the people, they added.

The Ministers and Ministers of State and Deputy Ministers (Remuneration and Privileges) (Amendment) Bill, 1993 also provided three months house rent for annual maintenance of such houses.

With the passage of the bill, a minister living in his house will be entitled to draw Tk 17,500 and a state/deputy minister Tk 15,000 as house rent per month. For maintenance of his house, a minister will draw Tk 52,500 and a state

deputy minister Tk 45,000 per year.

Justifying the amendment, LGD Minister Abdus Salam Talukder, who piloted the bill, said increase in house rent of the ministers living in their own house had already been provided in the bill passed in February last year. The present bill was required to correct an error inadvertently caused in the previous bill, he added.

Talukder contended that the benefits provided in the bill had also been approved by the privilege committee.

Earlier criticising the bill, opposition members said benefits and privileges of the ministers sanctioned by Parliament evoked a lot of criticism from the people as their sufferings had increased.

They said it is an act of public immorality and against the principle of the Constitution. People have voted the Parliament to mitigate their sufferings. Raising the benefits of the ministers will cause further dissatisfaction among the people.

Gallery

From Page 1 Col 8

BNP and AL four Jamaat members, without their parliamentary party chief Matur Rahman Nizami, and a solitary Jatiya Party member Ebadur Rahman Chowdhury were present.

The 29-seat front row was almost vacant where only four ministers and two senior AL members were seen at the end of the discussion.

Although only 61 members were present until the end of the discussion on poverty alleviation, some 32 members including three ministers spoke on the subject. The discussion began at 8:15 pm.

The BNP has 172, the AL 92, the JP 35 and the Jamaat 20 members in the 330-member House.

Newly-inducted State Minister for Planning Dr Moyeen Khan made his debut in the House yesterday by taking part in a discussion on poverty alleviation.

He started his brief speech conveying thanks to the Deputy Speaker, his Treasury bench colleagues, and also to Opposition MPs and said that by the grace of Almighty Allah he is making his first statement to the House as a minister.

He outlined his government's plan on poverty alleviation and called for a national consensus to eradicate it.

Perhaps in no other language is the word 'brother-in-law' deemed to be an 'unparliamentary' term. But the word often raises questions when pronounced in Bangla.

A Treasury bench member yesterday sought a ruling from the Deputy Speaker on whether the word 'brother-in-law' is an unparliamentary word or not.

Ruling party whip Mahbubul Alam Tara raised the point just after the speech of the Ganatantri Party leader Suranjit Sengupta who used the word during his speech on poverty alleviation.

In an oblique reference to a minister, Sengupta said the 'brother-in-law' syndrome will do nothing for the country.

"Please translate it into Bangla", Tara urged the Deputy Speaker.

The chair did not give a ruling but cautioned the next speaker Rashed Khan Menon of the Workers' Party by saying 'don't use the word brother-in-law'.

Minister for Industries AM Zahiruddin Khan prefers English to Bangla while speaking in Parliament.

He sought, the Speaker's permission to speak in English on poverty alleviation last night.

During his 15-minute speech, Khan, a non-MP who was recently transferred from the Ministry of Planning, gave a vivid description of the government's performance, future plans and Bangladesh's economic position in the South Asian region.

Russian trade team's visit puts off

A seven-member Russian trade delegation's scheduled visit to Bangladesh has been postponed amidst the power struggle now shaking Moscow, reports UNB.

The delegation, led by the Deputy Minister for External Economic Relations Mikhail E. Frakov, was due here today on a week-long visit.

A fresh date for the visit will be set at a mutually convenient time, an official said yesterday.

Moves for compromise in Russia

From Page 1 Col 2

agreement in St. Petersburg without Yeltsin's assent.

Yeltsin, in tandem with his shock dissolution of the parliament last Tuesday, ordered snap parliamentary elections for December and Thursday agreed to hold early presidential elections next June.

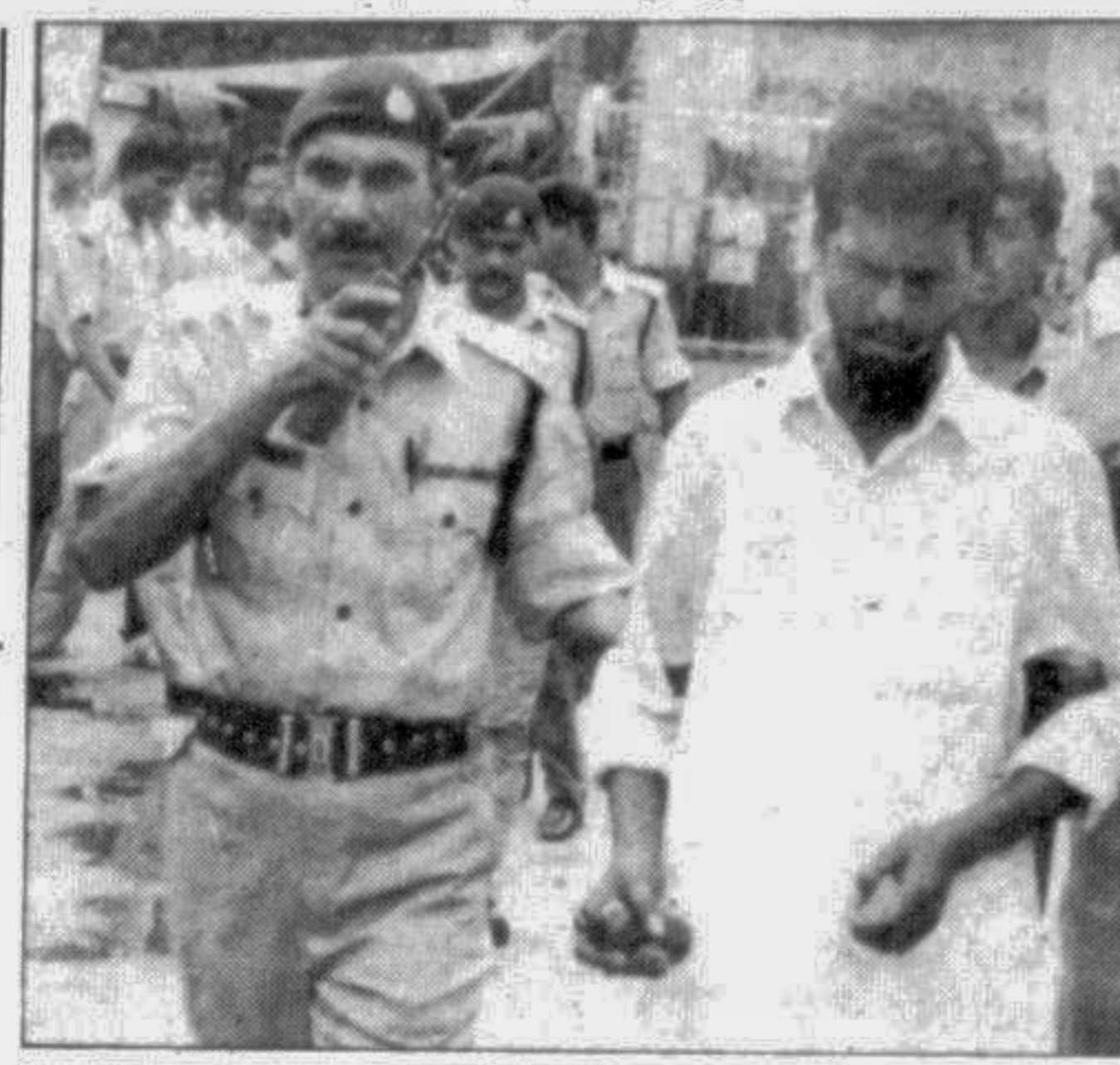
He said, however, that he opposed a simultaneous ballot as it would create a 'dangerous' power vacuum.

Earlier, regional council leaders met in the northern city of St. Petersburg today to consider setting up a parallel power structure to challenge Russian President Boris Yeltsin, sources at the meeting said.

They said 60 regional leaders, most of them strongly opposed to Yeltsin's dissolution of Russia's national parliament, were debating a proposal to set up a form of National Assembly in St. Petersburg. The body would attempt to control the country's budget from their regional power bases.

But as the Kremlin appeared to have struck a preliminary deal with executive and legislative leaders from Russia's farflung regions, the leaders of the self-proclaimed rival government that remains holed up in the parliament building stuck to a hard line that seemed to exclude compromise.

Russian Khasbulatov, the Speaker of the Soviet-era parliament that was dissolved by Yeltsin, earlier Sunday told reporters that the President must reverse that decision be-



All-Party Students' Unity (APSU) activists rounded up an outsider allegedly an Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) supporter and (bottom) a police officer escorted an ICS activist, carrying a bottle, at the Sir Salimullah Medical College in the city yesterday.

— Star photo

Return of Chakmas

From page 1 col 7

'dismantle apartheid'.

He said, Dhaka was thinking of establishing some sort of ties with Pretoria, particularly after the recent speech of Nelson Mandela, but added, "It would be short of diplomatic recognition."

The Foreign Secretary said the Prime Minister was likely to raise the Farakka issue at the current session of the UNGA during his address on October 1.

Pressed further, if the issue would be actually raised, the Foreign Secretary said, the final decision will be made by the Prime Minister.

"I don't want to pre-empt her speech," he added.

However, speaking on the Farakka issue, Reaz said the Indian Prime Minister had given a personal assurance that there would be no hardship for the people of Bangladesh. "But we had the lowest flow, below 10,000 cusecs, during the last dry season."

Giving an overview of the Prime Minister's forthcoming visit to the UN, he said, the PM would highlight the achievements made 'during the mid-point of her mandate'.

Answering reporters' questions, he said, there were no plans for her to meet the US President or to visit Washington. However, the Prime Minister is expected to meet the chiefs of some UN

agencies like the UNICEF and UNFPA, some State Department officials and also the Bangladesh community in New York. She is also expected to be interviewed by the mainstream US media including the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post and the Newswatch. The Prime Minister is also expected to meet the Prime Minister of Malaysia, the President of Nicaragua and the Indian Foreign Minister.

Asked why the itinerary of the Prime Minister did not include a visit to Washington or a meeting with the US President, the Foreign Secretary said, "The Prime Minister is primarily going to the UN and not to the US."

The Foreign Secretary refused to accept criticism that the Foreign Office has failed to make a maximum utilisation of the Prime Minister's trip to the US. He also did not reply why, when such emphasis was being given to closer ties with the US, the Foreign Office had failed to get a high level appointment in Washington.

Asked if there was a special reason for including the Attorney General on the trip, the Foreign Secretary said, he did not know much about it and added that it was the Prime Minister's discretion to include anyone she chooses.

The Prime Minister will leave for the UN on September 29.

World Tourism Day today

By Staff Correspondent

World Tourism Day will be observed in the country, as elsewhere round the globe, today with the message, "Tourism Development and Environment Protection: A Lasting Harmony."

On the eve of the occasion yesterday President Abdur Rahman Biswas asked all concerned to make the tourism industry a success.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, in her message, noted that tourism could significantly help environmental preservation by improving the nation's economy.

To mark the day, different organisations have undertaken elaborate programmes.

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation will hold cultural programmes and serve dinner at a reduced rate at all its commercial units.

At the BPC's Hotel Abakash, the International Pen-Pals Club will organise a seminar entitled "The Role of Tourism in Economic Development in Bangladesh."

The seminar will be attended by the State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism and the Establishment Secretary.

Bangladesh Television and Radio Bangladesh will broadcast special programmes highlighting the significance of the day.

Sonargaon Hotel and Hotel Sheraton have also planned separate programmes to celebrate the day.

57 activists of racist BNP held in East London

LONDON, Sept 26: Police on Sunday arrested 57 people, all believed to be members of the racist British National Party, as they arrived to distribute leaflets in a mainly Asian neighbourhood of East London, reports AP.

Police said they warned the BNP last week they "were not welcome in the East End" and would be arrested if they entered the Brick Lane area.

The BNP distributes leaflets and sells its newspaper in Brick Lane every Sunday. But tensions have been high in the neighbourhood following several racially motivated attacks on Asians and the election to a London borough council of a BNP candidate who campaigned for an all-white Britain.

Several dozen people were arrested last Sunday following violent street fights between BNP supporters and anti-racist demonstrators.

Scotland Yard Cmdr David Kendrick said 57 people were arrested Sunday for breaching the peace.

Euro-Parliament team due Oct 6

A 30-member delegation of the European Parliament will pay a week-long visit to Bangladesh beginning October 6, official sources said here yesterday.

During their stay, the delegation is expected to call on President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

The delegation is scheduled to meet Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali and some ministers.

This will be the first visit to Bangladesh by a delegation from the 12-nation European Parliament headquartered in Strasbourg, France.

The Midnight File

Independent Palestinian state in 3 yrs: Arafat

ANKARA, Sept 26: An independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital will be created within the next three years, PLO leader Yasser Arafat said at the end of a 24-hour official visit to Turkey, reports AFP.

Bodies of 14 blacks found

JOHANNESBURG, Sept 26: The bodies of 14 blacks, shot, stabbed, hacked or burned to death, have been found in the volatile townships east of Johannesburg, police said on today, reports Reuters.

Iraq restricts Alcohol sales

AMMAN, Sept 26: The Iraqi government has restricted alcohol sales and shut down many bars and nightclubs in the mostly secular Muslim nation, diplomats said Sunday, reports AP.

Pakistan won't halt N-plan

ISLAMABAD, Sept 26: Pakistan will not forego its nuclear capability unilaterally, despite earlier comments by caretaker Prime Minister Moeen Qureshi that Pakistan had frozen its nuclear programme, a government spokesman said here Saturday, reports AFP.

The clarification followed strong criticism of Qureshi's reported remarks from some fundamentalist political leaders.

Police pick up

From Page 1 Col 3

The five people detained in the police station were Fakhru Ameen, Fazlur Rahman, Ahsanullah, A Rahim and A Rahman, said police.

Tension is still prevailing in the hostel and on the college campus. Police have been deployed in and outside the campus and hostel. The ICS members left the campus after the meeting with the Academic Council.

Housing crisis

From Page 1 Col 6

growth of slums and squatter settlements are the direct outcome of population pressure on urban areas.

If appropriate measures are not taken, over 50 per cent of the urban population will be living in slums and squatter settlements by the year 2000, experts believe.

To deal with the housing crisis, the government plans to adopt a suitable policy for which a draft has already been prepared.

Official sources said the draft of the proposed National Housing Policy (NHP), formulated by a group of experts, may be placed before the cabinet today. The policy is expected to be made public during the first week of October.

Giving an outline of the proposed policy, the sources said the main objective of the NHP is to ensure housing for all strata of the society and to accelerate house building in the urban and rural areas with major emphasis on needs of the low and middle-income groups. The high priority target group in the policy will be the disadvantaged, the destitute and the shelterless poor.

According to the proposed strategy of the NHP, the government will act as promoter and facilitator of housing by the private sector while retaining the government's role as a provider to a limited extent.

Housing will be given due priority in the national development plans, treating it as a separate sector by itself, while government will strive to increase access to land, infrastructure, services and credit and to ensure availability of building materials at a reasonable price.

The NHP will be coordinated with other development policies on land, environment, population, employment, social welfare, fiscal and monetary.

Another protest rally was organised at the Tolarum College premises to condemn yesterday's police action in which a student of the college was also hurt.

Nirmul calls half-day hartal Oct 30

Ghatik Dalal Nirmul National Coordination Committee yesterday called a countrywide half-day hartal on October 30 to press for trial of Goolam Azam and ban on 'communal and fascist' politics of Jamaat-Shibir, the Freedom Party and the Juba Command, reports UNB.

The action programme was announced by Nirmul Coordination Committee chief Jahanara Imam at a rally in front of the National Museum yesterday evening.

It also announced blockade programme for Rajshahi, Chittagong and Khulna on October 5, 19 and 26 respectively to protest brutality and killings by Jamaat-Shibir and what it said inaction of law enforcing agencies.

Mass contact will be carried out by November 20 in the constituencies wherefrom Jamaat members were elected for withdrawal of support of the electorate from Jamaat MPs.

The Nirmul programme to press its 4-point demands also includes 'mass march' towards the Jatiya Sangsad on the first day of winter session of Parliament.

Addressing the gathering, Nirmul Committee leaders called upon student organisations to revive the All-Party Student Unity (APSU) that had played a vital role in toppling the Ershad regime to resist the 'enemies of humanity'.

N'ganj incident

From Page 1 Col 4

the demand for the Home Minister's resignation and punishment of the policemen responsible for the attack.

Chaired by the Awami League's district unit president Ansar Ali, the rally was also addressed by AL leaders Prof Nasma Rahman and Ashraf-uddin Channu, CPB leader Advocate Mantu Gosh and journalist Habibur Rahman Badal.

The speakers hailed the suspension of ASP Habibur Rahman and demanded removal of one Sub-Inspector Awal within 24 hours. Otherwise, they warned, agitation programmes including hartal would be announced to force the authorities to meet the demand.

Awal was reportedly looking for the daily Banglabazar Patrika correspondent Mostafa Karim with a hockey stick immediately after yesterday's police-people clash, they claimed.

Another protest rally was organised at the Tolarum College premises to condemn yesterday's police action in which a student of the college was also hurt.

Condolence

All members of the staff of The Daily Star convey their profound grief and heartfelt condolences at the sad demise of Mrs. Shakerah Rahman, mother of Mr. Latifur Rahman, Director, Mediaworld Ltd.

We pray for the salvation of her departed soul and may Allah rest her soul in eternal peace in Heaven.

May the Almighty give fortitude to the members of the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss.

Editor & members of the staff
of
The Daily Star

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Ironies

From Page 1 Col 2

Tuesday, had elected him its Chairman in May 1990.

— It elected Khasbulatov, then a protégé of Yeltsin, to succeed him in 1991 at the strong urging of the President.

— Rutskoi was elected in partnership with Yeltsin in June 1991 and toured the country campaigning for their joint ticket.

— Lawyer Nikolai Ryabov, who was one of the main opponents in Parliament of Yeltsin's proposed constitutional amendments, has been appointed to head the President's Central Election Commission after resigning as Deputy Chairman of Parliament.

— Alexander Pochinok, who was a strong parliamentary critic of radical market reform, becomes a Deputy Finance Minister after resigning as head of the legislature's budget and finance committee. Former acting Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, target of much of Pochinok's criticism, is acting Economics Minister.

Obituary

Abdul Barek, a former Ambassador to Kuwait and Advocate of the Supreme Court, died here last night of cardiac arrest at the Suhrawardy Hospital. He was 55, reports BSS.

He left behind his wife, one son and two daughters.

The body of late Barek will be kept at BIRDEM till his wife and daughter, now staying in New York, arrive, family sources said.

A large number of people including leaders of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) visited the Dhanmondi residence of the deceased to pay their respect.