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Both parties willing to talk transhipment in parliament

But they have different purposes in mind

By Nazmul Ashraf and Rezaul Karim

Both the treasury bench and opposition are willing to discuss the contentious move for land transhipment privilege to India in the approaching session of the Jatiya Sangsad beginning August 29.

The main opposition BNP is eager to cross words on the floor of the House castigating the cabinet's consent to explore the concept of transhipment by experts.

"We're ready to discuss the transhipment issue in the coming session of parliament. The JS Business Advisory Committee will decide the modality of the planned discussion," senior AL leader and Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak told The Daily Star.

A relaxed Razzak went on to say: "We don't find any problem in holding an open discussion on the transhipment idea, which the cabinet has approved in principle for it to be examined at the expert level. We'll

produce in the House the documents to justify our position. Besides, the BNP in power first signed the transit accord with India in 1980 and no successive government felt it to be detrimental to our national interest."

Asked if the government will incorporate elements of the opposition viewpoint emanating from the discussion, the minister said they were just working on an idea. "Our next steps will be guided by the experts authorised to work out the modality and technicalities. We'll also take into consideration the outcome of the planned discussion in parliament."

Chief whip of the opposition will said his party would resolutely oppose the current government move to grant India the facility, which he suspected would be used as a corridor.

He blamed the AL government for deciding "unilaterally" on all issues of national importance skirting lawmakers. "Had the issue been so urgent, a designated session of parliament could have been called before cabinet endorsement."

Sources in BNP said the party was divided about their part in parliament. Certain governing factor fawn joining

in the parliamentary debate while others contemplate the assembly should chorus diversely till the government overrules its decision.

BNP chief and leader of the opposition Khaleda Zia in the interim listened to her senior colleagues and legal experts endorse the cabinet sanctioned the transhipment idea on July 28. She is also generating public opinion solidly disputing the government motion.

A rendezvous of the BNP parliamentary party (BNP) will sanction or approve the party's tactics for the impending dispute, opposition chief whip said.

Similarly, Minister Abdur Razzak said, "The AL parliamentary party will likewise appropriate shortly to determine on a party approach to stand the opposition in parliament on consignment and other topics".



Court orders no-eviction till Aug 19

By SC Correspondent
The High Court by extending its earlier order yesterday directed the government and other authorities concerned not to demolish any slum in the city till August 19.

Earlier on Wednesday, the HC stayed demolition of the slum till hearing of the substantive writ petition at 10:30 am yesterday.

Upon a verbal prayer from the government yesterday, the HC adjourned hearing of the petition till August 17.

Attorney General Mahmudul Islam yesterday strongly opposed the writ petition and sought time to present relevant documents and the government position in this regard.

Ain-o-Salish Kendra, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, Odhikar and two slum dwellers named Ismot Ara Dipu and Rahima filed the writ.

It challenged the legality and authority of demolition of slums in the city and eviction of the inhabitants of those by the government, Dhaka City Corporation and RAJUK without arranging any alternative accommodation facilities and without any prior notice.

The petition has been filed against the government represented by the Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs and the Secretary, Ministry of Works, Dhaka City Corporation, RAJUK, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Deputy Commissioner and Metropolitan Police Complainants of Dhaka City demanding them as respondents.

A Division Bench of the HC comprising Justice KM Hasan and Justice MA Qudus passed the order yesterday.

Dr Kamal Hossain moved for the petitioners. Attorney General Mahmudul Islam along with Additional Attorney General Mahbub Alam, represented the government.

Frantic times
Demonstrating slum dwellers lay siege to Agargaon road in the city yesterday (top), and two infants sleep on the debris of a shanty at a slum at Tejgaon, which was demolished Wednesday, while their mother is out to get some food. — Star photo: Sk Enamul Huq

Anti-eviction protest turns violent

200 vehicles damaged, 50 hurt in city sunk in chaos by angry outbursts

By Staff Correspondent

Thousands of rampaging slum dwellers yesterday fought pitched battles with police, blocking key city streets and damaging around 200 passing vehicles fearing demolition of a Agargaon slum.

At least 50 people including two cops were injured.

Hundreds of vehicles were stranded on both sides of the area due to the protests causing major traffic disruptions during peak hour, witnesses and police said. The regular traffic between downtown Dhaka and Mirpur-Gabtali area came to halt for four hours till 11:30am.

Police fired five rounds of blank shots and around 25 teargas canisters to quell the frenzied demonstrations. Many

protesters were even lying on the streets.

The trouble erupted when police came at the Agargaon BNP slum adjacent to the Bangladesh Betar station and the Planning Commission at around 7:45pm. The presence of police triggered fears among an estimated 60,000 slum dwellers in the sprawling Agargaon slum, popularly known as the BNP bustee, that they would start demolishing the shanties.

Tension was already prevailing among the slum dwellers as police on Wednesday night had announced over microphone that they would carry out eviction on Thursday.

Thousands of people started

coming out of their shanties as rumours spread that police had arrived in Agargaon to evict them, said Mir Ali, 32, a rickshaw puller living in the slum. They took positions in front of the Agargaon colony, Rokeya Sarani and Mirpur Road near the children's park. They chanted slogans against the eviction move of the government.

The protesters set up road blocks, disrupting vehicular traffic. Reinforcement with riot gears was sent to the spot to bolster police strength. Water cannon carriers were also deployed.

Police resorted to firing at around 10:45 am near Shyamoli when a large crowd

suddenly became unruly, witnesses said. They set fire to some vehicles. Fire fighters rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Witnesses also said that the traffic from Dhaka city to Gabtali and Agargaon to the entire area of Mirpur was totally stranded during the more than six-hour clashes.

After 2 pm only cars and autorickshaws started plying Rokeya Sarani and Mirpur Road, but no buses were seen on the road till evening.

When contacted later, police officials denied that they went there to demolish the slum, but failed to explain the reason for their appearance on the scene.

Tragic splendour

Bengali poets have heralded the monsoon the king of seasons. The incessant rain is back again enlivening all forms of life. Star

photographer AKM Mohsin photographed the aquatic lotus blossom. The aquatic flower also happens to be

the nation's national flower.

Inter-ministerial failure to firm up power projects

An interministerial meeting on power sector development in the city yesterday again failed to finalise the projects needed to improve power situation, reports UNB.

"However, it was a fruitful meeting. At least we went one step forward. The projects will be finalised soon and would go for ECNEC approval," said a high official of a power-related body.

According to sources, the Energy Ministry will pressure on the Finance Ministry to agree on the much needed reform and rehabilitation projects and mobilise funds as soon as possible to avert further crisis.

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria and State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources Professor Rafiqul Islam

were present at the meeting at the finance ministry.

The energy ministry is yet to start its urgent development programme in the sector because of shortage of funds for which it has been trying for last 3-4 months.

The ministry had earlier requested for Tk 500 crore to modernise and rehabilitate its outdated generation plants to recover at least 350 MW electricity from the existing plants.

The funds are yet to be released by the finance ministry.

In March this year, when the power crisis became acute, the energy ministry decided to install GOB funded new power generation plants capable of producing 350 MW to 500 MW to meet the demand. The State Minister for Energy met the Prime Minister who is in

charge of the ministry to get her approval for the programme.

As per decision of the meeting, the energy ministry asked for tenders from interested parties capable of installing the plants within six months. About 15 power companies applied to get the jobs to install new plants.

According to sources, although the Prime Minister approved the programme, the finance ministry differed with the plan and floated a new idea of modernising the old plants to recover at least 350 MW to 500 MW.

The meeting accepted the new idea and asked the Finance Ministry and Economic Relations Department to organise a fund for rehabilitating the older plants. It also included

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Bangladeshis in dire straits

Those who fled detention centre in Malaysia are yet to be traced

By Reaz Ahmad

The government is yet to determine the fate of an unspecified number of Bangladeshis who fled a detention centre in Malaysia late last month.

The Bangladeshis who were among 192 foreign workers could no longer bear unhygienic condition in the detention camp where at least one Indonesian died of respiratory problem, reports from

Malaysia said. On July 27, some 689 out of 1,027 detainees at the Lenggeng Detention Centre demonstrated against rationing of water for three days and health problems. One detainee died while many others complained of respiratory complications at the camp. During the demonstration about 192 of the detainees escaped from the camp.

in defiance of the security personnel to protest water rationing.

The escapees comprised Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, Indians, Myanmarese and Indians.

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