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'Mass leave' threatens key power plants

Govt warns of punishment

Star Report

The government has warned that stern action would be taken if the officials at Ashuganj power plant go on strike.

But the officials reiterated yesterday that they would begin a three-day abstention from work on Tuesday by going on "mass leave" as per an earlier announcement by the "Bidyut Utpadan Karmakarta Samity", an organisation of power sector officials in the country.

They are pressing their five-point demand including cancellation of a government decision to set up Ahuganj Power Company.

The government's warning followed failure of talks between the PBD authorities and Samity leaders last night.

Ashuganj plant generates about 750 MW of power. The to-

tal power generated in the country is around 2500 MW.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, a top official of PBD said, "The demands of the officials are not justified. They will violate law if they go on strike".

The government had earlier declared services in the power sector "essential", making strike illegal.

A press release of the Samity last night said all the officers at Ashuganj power units submitted their leave applications and other employees also joined their move. The employees said they will not take the risk of running the power plant without the guidance of officers and engineers.

The press release claimed that top executives at some other power plants also submit-

ted their leave applications.

A leader of the Samity requested anonymity told to The Daily Star, "We are aware that public reaction to this programme would not be in our favour. But we have no alternative but to go for this programme."

Their other demands are cancellation of Electricity Reforms Act, steps to stop power pilferage, 100 per cent insurance coverage of power plants, supervision allowance and accountability of the Power Division.

During the work abstention

programme, the power units will continue to operate. But if any of these trips or develops problem, the officials and engineers will not resolve those.

The Samity and the Karmakarta-Karmakarta Oikyo Parishad raised the five point demand a couple of months ago.

As their movements intensified, the State Minister for Energy Prof Rafiqul Islam met the Oikyo Parishad leaders last month. The State Minister asked the leaders to give him a one-month time to resolve their problems. Accordingly, the Oikyo Parishad decided to refrain from agitation throughout December.

The officers association was "enraged" by some comments made by a mission of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) regarding the Ashuganj Power Company, sources said.

ADB was pressing the government to form the Ashuganj Power Company and go for power sector reforms.



Police keep an eye on the windows and one on the street near BNP central office at Naya Paltan before swinging into action during the hartal hours in the capital yesterday.

— Star photo

Mayoral arrogance

Hawkers' market at Osmany Udyan will go ahead

By Staff Correspondent

The Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation is going ahead with his plan to build a hawker market at the Osmany Udyan, ignoring strong opposition from top officials in his office and criticism from different quarters, sources concerned said.

DCC's Engineering Department recently demarcated one acre of land in the park at a cost of about Tk 1.5 lakh for the proposed market to rehabilitate hawkers to fulfil the mayor's election pledge, they said.

As per plan, hawkers would be allowed to do business there from dawn to dusk, officials in DCC's Estate Department said.

The top officials opposing the mayoral plan are in favour of immediate steps to beautify the only green open space between the oil and new parts of the city and bring back a healthy environment in the area, the sources said.

The mayoral onslaught on the public park came just after a public outcry compelled the government to change its decision and shift the proposed venue of the NAM convention centre from there.

The Mayor in his election campaign had pledged that hawkers on city's footpaths would be rehabilitated to ease traffic jam on streets.

A DCC official requesting anonymity said a section of officials revived the rehabilitation project to "please the mayor for their vested interest". Many quarters criticised the decision and appealed to the Mayor to change it, he said.

Meanwhile, an office of Juba League, youth front of the ruling Awami League, was set up in the Osmany Udyan area last week. DCC officials said they saw the construction work of the office but did not have any idea who were doing it. Asked whether they informed police about it, the officials replied in the negative.

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BSF kills 5

Shooting on
alleged Indo-
Bangla
smugglers

From Sakyasen Mittra

CALCUTTA, Dec 5: Five people were shot dead by Border Security Force jawans at a village along Bangladesh-West Bengal border on Friday. The incident took place about 560 kilometres from village Dharphat in the Dinbella Block of Coochbehar.

Among the five is a student who had just passed his class 12 examination. Trouble started when three BSF jawans beat up a cycle van puller Subhas Burman and broke his vehicle, West Bengal police said.

Villagers then surrounded the three BSF men and demanded compensation. At the intervention of some senior villagers the BSF jawans were taken to the local panchayat office at Sukurkothi two kilometres from the Bangladesh border. Villagers said that they would not be released till a settlement was made.

Meanwhile, after getting information 12 other BSF jawans rushed to the spot and started firing indiscriminately killing Habibur Rahman, 37, Samuels Haq, 27, Bakul Chandra Sen, 19, Rafiqul Islam, 21, and Alif Shaikh, 23, on the spot.

Of the injured condition of Ghulam Mostafa is stated to be serious. Villagers alleged that three BSF jawans also fired on the crowd from the panchayat office.

Rafiqul Islam was shot while he was returning home on his bicycle after attending a tuition session. He was shot in his head and died on the spot.

A BSF spokesman at Calcutta yesterday said, that all those killed were involved in smuggling items across the border. That village is famous for the entrance of computer softwares into India from Bangladesh. The smuggled items are then taken to Murshidabad from where they are distributed to different parts of the country. When the BSF jawans challenged a carrier, locals attacked the three. They had no option but to fire.

The state government, however, has ordered a high level enquiry into the matter.

"We would have electoral re-

US backs Saarc energy grid plan

Star Report

The US State Department for Energy promoted a SAARC seminar on regional energy exchange in Nepal late last week where prospects of gas export from Bangladesh to India through pipeline were discussed.

Sources said the two-day seminar discussed import of cheap hydro-electricity from Nepal to Bangladesh and India, and export of Bangladeshi gas to India among other options.

Unocal Bangladesh's chief Terry Budden presented a paper in the seminar.

Officials from India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh took part in the seminar held on Thursday and Friday last week.

US is trying to promote the idea of establishing a common energy grid in the SAARC region.

Nepalese officials said that Nepal has the potential of producing over 40,000 MW of cheap hydro-electricity that drew interest from India and Bangladesh.

Musa was undergoing treatment at the DMCH in a critical condition. Mirpur police failed to arrest anyone in connection with the killing till writing of this report till last night.

The body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College

Day-long hartal halts life, hurts 50, has 62 detained

By Staff Correspondent

At least 50 people were injured, 35 of them including five policemen in the city, on the first day yesterday of the opposition called a two-day countrywide dawn to dusk hartal.

The hartal paralysed life across the country.

Police detained 62 people for picketing in different parts of the city.

The hartal, called by the BNP-led four party alliance

demanding resignation of the Awami League government and early general elections, was the first since the November 30 meeting of chiefs of the parties. The three other parties are Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, and Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ).

About 6,000 policemen and BDR were deployed in the city since early morning yesterday to maintain law and order.

Ruling Awami League also brought out anti-hartal process-

sions in different areas of the city.

The areas around BNP central office at Naya Paltan and Jatrabari were the main trouble spots.

Clashes between BNP activists and police erupted in Naya Paltan area twice, at about noon and late afternoon, leaving 15 people injured.

Police lobbed at least 15 teargas shells and fired rubber

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BNP 'forgets' Democracy Day

By Nazmul Ashraf
December 6, the day general Ershad was forced to quit power, is back again today with yet another major political party that propelled his ouster now allied with the fallen dictator.

This time, Ershad has found a trusted partner in BNP chief Khaleda Zia—who once enjoyed the reputation of being the uncompromising leader in the struggle against his regime—in the fight against the Awami League government of Sheikh Hasina.

In a span of nine years, the nation saw the country's two top political leaders compromising with Ershad who they forced to step aside this day nine years ago and hand over power to a caretaker administration led by the then Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, now the President.

AL and BNP in alliance with other smaller parties brought an end to the nine-year-long autocracy of Ershad on December 6.

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Ramadan prices for beef, mutton

By Staff Correspondent

Residents will pay between Tk 70 and Tk 80 per kilogram for beef and Tk 120 per kilogram for mutton during Ramadan, a Dhaka City Corporation official announced yesterday.

The decision followed a meeting between Mayor Hanif and the butcher's association. The city fixes the prices during the Holy month to curb profit taking and to crack down on illegal butcher shops.

DCC health officials warned butchers a mobile court will hit the streets shortly, prowl for illegal meat. The court consists of health officials, a veterinarian and a magistrate who has the power to confiscate unauthorised meat.

Under the Municipality Meat Control Act, butchers are forbidden from slaughtering an animal until a veterinarian certifies that it is healthy. A sick animal's meat could cause serious illnesses.

Officials said there are over 300 illegal butchers selling meat that might be contaminated. In the last six months alone, over 500 cases have been filed with the DCC court against illegal butchers.

DCC officials said there are a lot of illegal butchers because there hasn't been an initiative to meet the demand created by the city's growing population.

Quake rocks Moheshkhali for third time

COX'S BAZAR, Dec 5: A mild earthquake rocked Moheshkhali island at 5:50 pm today, reports BSS.

The epicenter of the tremor could not be determined as there is no Seismograph.

This was the third time Moheshkhali island, off Cox's Bazar, was rocked by earthquake. The island was first rocked on July 22 last when five people died and many houses were damaged.

The second tremor shook Moheshkhali island on August 3 last, but it did not cause any damage.

The people of the island have been panic-stricken because of frequent earthquakes. Some elderly people apprehend that Moheshkhali island is frequently rocked by tremor as mines are being exploded in the Bay of Bengal for exploration of gas.

Pak generals promise local polls in a year

But parliamentary democracy still remains out of sight

ISLAMABAD, Dec 5: Pakistani military ruler General Pervez Musharraf promised on Saturday to install elected district authorities after a year, in a move that seemed to rule out the revival of parliamentary democracy by that time, reports Reuters.

The state media also quoted him as vowing to introduce electoral reforms and strengthen the national Election Commission in remarks made to foreign diplomats.

Armenian Musharraf has said the past that he would first try to install democratic institutions at grassroots level, and political sources said his remarks seemed to indicate that he did not intend to restore parliamentary democracy by the end of 2000.

"It is quite obvious, it will take one year to install self-government at the local level... and democracy at federal level will have to wait longer," a spokesman for opposition

leader Benazir Bhutto said.

"It means we are entering the 21st century without democracy, and it is very sad," spokesman Farhatullah Babar told Reuters.

Musharraf suspended parliament and the constitution after the coup and says he cannot give a timeframe for a democratic revival before implementing a seven-point programme for economic and political reforms.

APP said Musharraf gave a detailed briefing on his policies and reform agenda to the diplomats, who met him to offer condolences on the death of his father, former diplomat Syed Musharraf Uddin, two days ago after a protracted illness. Musharraf said he was committed to building "genuine democracy and respected international sentiment."

"This is quite obvious, it will take one year to install self-government at the local level... and democracy at federal level will have to wait longer," a spokesman for opposition

International appeal for '71 war crimes tribunal

'One way to pay tribute to legendary Sufia Kamal'

The international human rights and civil society organisations have urged the Bangladeshi government to establish war-crimes tribunal to show true respect to legendary Bengali woman Sufia Kamal, reports UNB.

In a condolence message received in the city yesterday they said by doing so under Bangladesh's law, specifically the International Crimes Tribunal Act 1973, Bangladesh would be able to establish a positive example.

"This could be followed by other nations where crime against humanity, war crimes and genocide were conducted," says the joint message issued from New York.

Conveying condolence at the death of Bangladesh's legendary poet, they said her death is an irreparable loss for Bangladesh and believed that her life and work was an inspiration to Bangladeshi people, as also for all progressive movements of the world.

They hoped that Bangladesh and Bangladesh's citizens would continue their support to the international community for establishing justice and peace, which was a true and just dream of her, and help realise one of Sufia Kamal's dreams.

The human rights and non-governmental organisations which signed the condolence message are Ms Indai Lourdes Sajor, Director of Asian Centre for Women's Human Rights—ASCENT (Philippines), Dr Neloufer de Mel of Women and Media Collective (Sri Lanka), Farooq Tariq, General Secretary of Labour Party of Pakistan, Tanveer Ahmed Meer of Sustainable Development Policy Institute—SDPI (Pakistan), Japanese Network for the International Criminal Court (JNICC) of Japan, INFORM of Sri Lanka, The Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (Sri Lanka), OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia) Regional NGO Network on Asia Pacific Decade of Person with Disability, Vahida Nainar of Women Caucus for Gender Justice (New York, USA), Yuri Boboslavsky, Director of Glasnost Foundation (Moscow),

Russia), Nirmala Pandit, Legal Officer for Asia of International Commission of Jurist (Geneva, Switzerland), Sushil Khanna of Indian Institute of Management (Calcutta, India), Farooq Tariq, General Secretary of Labour Party of Pakistan, Tanveer Ahmed Meer of Sustainable Development Policy Institute—SDPI (Pakistan), Japanese Network for the International Criminal Court (JNICC) of Japan, INFORM of Sri Lanka, The Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (Sri Lanka), OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia) Regional NGO Network on Asia Pacific Decade of Person with Disability, Vahida Nainar of Women Caucus for Gender Justice (New York, USA), Yuri Boboslavsky, Director of Glasnost Foundation (Moscow),

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