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Talks with road transport owners Thursday

By Staff Correspondent

The government has called a meeting with road transport owners on Thursday to discuss various problems facing the sector including the recent fuel price hike, according to sources.

The meeting will be held at the conference room of the Ministry of Communications with Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju in the chair.

The transport owners had threatened a countrywide strike from September 1 if fuel price is not reduced.

The government officials showed keen interest during the previous discussion on the problems faced by the transport owners, said a leader of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Samity.

"So, we are hopeful that the government would take positive steps to solve our problems and we would not have to go on strike," he said.

He, however, did not say what was the government's proposal for resolving the problems arising out of the hike in fuel price.

Transport owners at different routes increased the fare by 20 to 30 per cent following the fuel price hike.

Hezb threatens to widen attacks

Delhi accused of trying to split Mujahideen

ISLAMABAD, Aug 28: A leading militant group battling Indian troops in India's violent Kashmir state threatened today to take its fight beyond the state borders into the remainder of India, reports AP.

Hezb-ul Mujahideen, the militants who observed an abbreviated cease-fire last month, accused New Delhi of trying to create divisions within the organisation with suggestions of another cease-fire.

Recent reports out of India indicated Hezb-ul Mujahideen may be ready to embark on another cease-fire. The last one collapsed after India refused to accept Pakistan at the negotiation table in three-way peace talks.

India accuses Pakistan of arming and training militant secessionists, who are waging a bitter 11-year insurgency in Indian-ruled Kashmir demanding either outright independence or union with Islamic Pakistan.

Pakistan denies the charges, but says it is sympathetic to the Muslim Kashmiris. Divided 53 years ago between India and Pakistan, both countries lay claim to a reunited Kashmir.

Following a meeting Monday of Hezb-ul Mujahideen's central command in Pakistani-controlled Kashmir, its chief Syed Salahuddin ruled out another cease-fire without prior agreement from India to talk to Pakistan.

"Until Indian comes forward for meaningful talks that include Pakistan, the Mujahideen will continue its activities in Kashmir," he said in a statement.

He warned that the battle could spread beyond Kashmir's borders.

"If the Indian army continues its atrocities against Kashmiris, Mujahideen will spread its activities all over India," Salahuddin said without elaborating.

Militants and human rights groups accuse the Indian army of widespread intimidation and human rights abuses. India accuses the militants, with the aid of Pakistan, of killing civilians.

Salahuddin also accused New Delhi of trying to divide the militancy in Kashmir with contradictory statements from different groups.

"We will make a comprehensive plan to crush the disinformation propaganda by the Indian government," said Salahuddin, although he didn't offer any specifics.

"Kashmiris want peace, not for the sake of peace, but for the sake of independence," he said.



Police guard the entrance of the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) at Kakrail in the city yesterday (left) following attacks by outsiders that left the window panes of the bureau broken (right) earlier on the day. Bangladesh workers who returned home from Kuwait and Iraq during the Gulf War gathered at the BMET premises to receive their compensation provided by the United Nations. Ramna thana said that they sent personnel following an anonymous phone call complaining of attacks on compensation recipients. No case was filed in this regard. The Daily Star had earlier reported that the Kuwait-Iraq returnees were forced to pay tolls in getting the compensation. — Star photo

Dengue: 41 more hospitalised in city

By Staff Correspondent

Forty-one people with dengue fever were hospitalised yesterday in the city.

Sources said Dhaka Medical College Hospital admitted 13 patients with dengue fever and Mitford Hospital two patients.

Dhaka Shishu Hospital reported admitting five fresh cases while BIRDEM reported admitting one.

The Red Crescent Holy Family Hospital reported two and Bangladesh Medical College Hospital reported admitting two patients.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital reported admitting three patients and Suhrawardi two.

Central Hospital and Samarita Hospital reported admitting two and five patients respectively while Al-Raji Hospital reported admitting four patients with the fever.

Until yesterday, 47 people died of dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF) and dengue shock syndrome (DSS) while 2,657 people so far were hospitalised since the outbreak of the dreaded disease last month. Till yesterday, 194 people were under treatment for the disease in different city hospitals and clinics.



Laws regarding NGOs being reviewed

By Staff Correspondent

The Law Commission is examining whether the laws regulating the voluntary social welfare organisations known as NGOs should be amalgamated into one single law for their better monitoring and accountability, officials said yesterday.

The government recently sent a reference to the commission to examine a draft bill prepared in this regard by the Ministry of Social Welfare, the officials added.

The commission has consulted 30 leading NGOs for their opinion regarding the proposed changes being planned in the law, sources said adding that many of those leading NGOs have already sent their recommendations.

The four laws under which the NGOs are governed include Societies Registration Act, 1860; Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration and Control) Ordinance, 1961; Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Ordinance, 1978; and Foreign Donation (Voluntary Activities Regulation) Ordinance, 1978.

Farooq new envoy to Philippines

Mohammed Farooq, now Bangladesh Consul-General in Los Angeles, has been appointed Ambassador to the Philippines, reports UNB.

Farooq joined the Foreign Ministry in 1973 and held various important positions at home and abroad, said an official release.

PM calls spl cabinet meet today

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has called a special meeting of members of the Cabinet and advisors at 7 pm at the Ganabhaban today, reports BSS.

Sources at the prime minister's office said she will discuss various important issues.

Besides taking some important decisions, the prime minister may give guidelines on different matters, the sources added.

Rupsha Bridge 18 cos submit pre-qualification applications

By Staff Correspondent

Eighteen international companies submitted pre-qualification applications on August 26 for the proposed Tk 650 crore Rupsha Bridge near Khulna to connect the Mongla Port by road, sources said.

Earlier, 38 companies purchased tender documents from the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) for the project to be financed mainly by Japan Bank of Industrial Cooperation (JBIC) of Japan. The bridge would be 1360 meters in length and 16 meters in width.

The JBIC and the RHD would pre-select bidders from these applications. The selected bidders would have to submit proposals by the end of September and the authorities would finalise the best bid within 45 days of the submission. The best bidder will have to complete the project within 40 months of the signing of the final agreement.

Bhutanese team to talk trade, transit issues

By M Anwarul Haq

The two nations already have a Cooperation Agreement which was signed in 1980 for 10 years and was renewed for another 10 years. The agreement expires on September 7.

The new Agreement is expected to be similar to the existing one but more comprehensive in nature. It is likely to include provisions for a second transit route for passage of goods to and from Bhutan and identify more items for trade between the two countries.

Thimpu may also seek improved port facilities from Bangladesh for export and import of the landlocked kingdom.

One source pointed out that the proposed second transit route is to connect Bhutan and Bangladesh through Nakugan in Sherpur district and Daitu in India near the Bhutanese border.

The route would connect eastern Bhutan and would also be shorter and more economic for transportation of cargo. The present transit route through the land port at Burimari lacks necessary infrastructure facilities including warehouses, electricity and telecommunication.

The Bhutanese Foreign Secretary is also expected to meet the Bangladesh Foreign Secretary and hold talks on strengthening bilateral ties and other matters of mutual concern.

The delegation will be in Dhaka for four days. The talks at different levels would be held on August 30 and 31. The team would leave on September 1.

The Bhutanese Ambassador told The Daily Star his country considers Bangladesh as one of its closest friends and there is a great potential for further expansion of trade and economic cooperation.

Thimpu currently enjoys a big surplus balance of trade with Dhaka. It now exports fresh fruits, canned fruits, wood products and marble to Bangladesh. It has several other exportable items of world class including marble, wood, pulp products, ferro-silicon, limestone and coal.

Bhutan's Foreign Minister Lympo Jigme Thinley during his recent visit to Dhaka asked local businessmen to seek markets for Bangladeshi goods in his country.

Bhutan's Druk Air operates a regular service between capitals of the two countries.

Registration of Private Schools Ordn '62 to be amended

The Cabinet yesterday approved a proposal to amend the Registration of Private Schools Ordinance, 1962, reports UNB.

The Cabinet at its weekly meeting at the PM's office with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair, also decided to form a "Floor and Water Bodies Development Board."

Headed by the prime minister, ministers concerned will be members of the board.

Garment workers demand compensation

The Garments Sramik Oikya Parishad, an organisation of garments workers, took out a procession in the city yesterday demanding compensation to the families of victims of fire at Globe Knitting Ltd. at Banani on Sunday.

— Star photo

Ershad files provisional appeal

Former president H M Ershad yesterday filed a provisional appeal along with a petition before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, seeking time for his surrender, court officials said, reports BSS.

Court officials said the Appellate Division's Vacation Bench comprising Justice AM Mahmudur Rahman is likely to hear the provisional appeal on August 31.

Power tariff hike triggers violent protest in Hyderabad: 2 killed

HYDERABAD, Aug 28: Thousands of opposition activists protesting a hike in power tariffs burned police cars and pelted policemen with stones today in southern India, and two people were killed in police firing, eyewitnesses said, reports AP.

Dozens of other people were injured, police said. The dead included a policeman killed in firing by his colleagues to stop the protesters, and a young man in his 20s.

The mob included members of the opposition Congress party and nine communist groups protesting an increase in power tariffs aimed at reforming the state's government-run power sector.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, the state's top elected official, had earlier announced a 20 per cent increase but reduced it to 15 per cent, bowing to opposition demands.

The protesters, who started marching toward the state assembly, had declared they would storm the opulent white building, which has tall minarets and a huge dome. Police fired when the protesters did not stop and pushed away traffic barriers placed on the road.

Most of India's power production and distribution is controlled by the federal and state governments. Power reforms are being carried out in several states to either cut the sloth in state-run power companies or privatize the operations.

Naidu had urged the opposition to defer its protest until after the government had dealt with the devastating floods in the state, where 150 people have been killed and millions left homeless after torrential rains. But the opposition rejected the request.



Demonstrators set fire to a police jeep protesting the government's recent hike in power rates in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad yesterday. At least two people were killed when police opened fire on the protesters. — AFP photo

Country-wide load shedding was 227MW yesterday

By Staff Correspondent

The country yesterday suffered load-shedding to the tune of more than 277 megawatt (MW) against a requirement of 2725 MW.

Besides, 12 power generating units remained shut yesterday. These are three 210 MW units - Rajan-2, Ghorasal-3 and Ghorasal-6, Sylhet Gas, Shahjibazar-3, Fenchuganj Gas Turbine-1 and 2, Khulna Barge Mounted Plant-1, Khulna 110 MW, Rangpur Gas Turbine, Ashuganj CCCP and Ashuganj Steam.

Meanwhile, power failure coupled with sultry weather increased the suffering of people in different parts of the city yesterday.

The DESA Control Room said last night that the metropolis yesterday suffered 42 MW of load-shedding.

The PDB yesterday generated 2410 MW of power while the countrywide demand was 2725.

Tk 1 lakh looted from filling station in Iswardi

PABNA, Aug 28: Gunmen snatched about Tk one lakh from Kobat filling station at Dashuria highway junction in Iswardi at 2:30 am today, reports UNB.

Muggers numbering seven came in a white car on the pretext of refuelling. They mercifully beat two employees at the pump, Nazrul and Pallab, and took away the money at gunpoint.

Police, quoting the employees, said the gunmen tried in vain to break open the strong room where more money was kept.

PM's relative involved in Boral killing: Khaleda

NANDAIL, Mymensingh, Aug 28: BNP chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia today said people are now suffering from a sense of insecurity as "ruling partymen are involved in the killing of their own colleagues," reports UNB.

"The Awami Leaguers are not only killing opposition leaders and workers, they've now started killing their own partymen," she told a big public meeting at the Khurram Khan Chowdhury College ground at Kanurampur in the afternoon.

Khaleda said that the Awami League men were involved in the killing of Advocate Habibur Rahman Mondal in Dhaka. Advocate Kalidas Boral in Bagerhat and SMA Rab in Khulna.

"Even it was heard that a relative of the Prime Minister is involved in the killing of AL leader Boral," she said.

The opposition leader said the government has failed to ensure security of the people.

"How would it provide security to the people when the ruling party men are killing their own colleagues?"

She said: "Now people want peace for their survival and want the Awami League government to go. The countrymen are looking at BNP as the party ensured peaceful life in the past and can do so in the future."

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Dhaka to seek German aid for 12 projects

By Rafiq Hasan

Bangladesh will seek German assistance for 12 projects at the annual negotiation between the two countries in October, Finance Ministry sources said.

The negotiation is scheduled to be held in Dhaka from October 31- November 2. Germany had committed 50 million Deutsche mark at the last annual meeting in November 1999.

The Finance Ministry sources believed that Germany would commit similar amount of assistance this time, too. The government has prepared project proposals identifying the possible areas for financial help and technical assistance from Germany.

One source said the German government may provide assistance in areas like human resource development including primary education, health and family planning, infrastructure development including energy and transport and promotion of private small and medium-scale industry including vocational training and environment.

A three-member delegation would go to Germany next month to have a detailed discussion about the 12 projects. It would seek financial assistance for five projects and technical assistance for seven projects.

The delegation led by Abdur Razzaq, joint secretary and chief of the Europe desk at the External Relations Division (ERD), is likely to leave Dhaka on September 3 for a week-long visit.

German Technical Co-operation GTZ is arranging the visit. The delegation would meet the officials at different German agencies for development and Cooperation like BMZ, KFW and GTZ.

Harunur Rashid Bhuiyan, the economic councillor at Bangladesh Embassy in Bonn, would also join the delegation during the discussion.

An agreement was signed between Bangladesh and Germany recently under which the latter would provide 43 million Deutsche mark, equivalent to Tk 100 crore, for three projects.

The projects are: Rehabilitation of Ashuganj Power Plant, Dredging for Chittagong Port and pre-paid metering system in power supply.

German Ambassador Uwe Schramm and ERD Secretary A K M Mashur Rahman signed the agreement on behalf of their respective governments.

Germany had earlier pledged to provide 85 million dollars as project aid during 1999-2000 financial year. However, it did not commit any food or commodity aid to Bangladesh during the last fiscal.

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