

PDB staff for reforms to stop loss

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of eight associations representing officials and employees of Power Development Board (PDB) yesterday said "appropriate reforms" are needed to save the loss-incurring power sector.

Such reforms will remove much of the mismanagement, bureaucratic tangle, corruption, lack of transparency and accountability now plaguing the sector, they said.

Addressing a joint press conference at the Jatya Press Club, they said due to lack of "adequate returns" from distribution networks for reinvestment, the sector has become "totally dependent" on donors' loan.

They alleged that project costs of some donor-funded power projects were inflated illogically due to irregularities and corruption, which is ultimately being borne by PDB.

They said the distribution sector is a priority area but its performance is unsatisfactory since the 1980s due to lack of "appropriate reforms" in the distribution system.

"All attempts to bring reforms in the power sector will go in vain if internal cash flow from the distribution sector is not adequate," Mizanur Rahman of Bangladesh Water and Power Engineers Association said.

He said, to supply electricity at affordable prices, the officials and employees associations submitted "full-fledged reform programmes" to the ministry after consultations with energy experts, economists and politicians but the proposals were ignored due to "pressure from donors and their one-sided prescriptions".

Instead, the ministry went for

some reforms as per donors' prescriptions, which created frustration among PDB's 24,000 officials and employees.

The leaders said, instead of bringing about reforms in the distribution system, the government has taken an initiative to hand over PDB's transmission networks to the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB) "due to pressure from donors."

It is now clear that the step for corporatisation and privatisation of generation plants is part of a "blue print" prepared by some foreign companies, they alleged. Formation of the PGCB was violation of government's energy policy.

The leaders said Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) was converted into DESCO as per donors' suggestion, but it did not bear any fruit.

The leaders suggested that generation, transmission and distribution be treated as separate sub-sectors with adequate trained manpower for each.

They expressed the hope that the government would refrain from following suggestion of donors in the greater interest of the nation.

The press conference was attended by, among others, Shahid Ahmed and AZM Lutfe Rabbani of Bangladesh Water and Power Engineers Association, AKM Moazzem Hossain of Bangladesh Water and Power Diploma Engineers Association, Abdus Salam Khan and Alauddin Miah of Bangladesh Jatya Bidut Sramik League and Kazi Abdul Halim of Bangladesh Jatya Bidut Sramik Karmachari Union (CBA).

Nat'l Sports Award-2000

FROM PAGE 12

The Prime Minister said guidelines have been given to the relevant ministry to conduct sports activities fairly and properly for development of the sector.

The prime minister presented the award, which includes a gold medal and Tk 20,000 in cash to each recipient. Introduced in 1976 by late President Ziaur Rahman, the National Sports Award is aimed at recognising the contributions of renowned sportsmen and sports organisers in different branches of sports.

Ten renowned sportsmen and sports organisers were awarded the Jatya Kiria Purushkar-2000 for their outstanding contributions. They are: A S M Raquibul Hasan and Gazi Ashraf Hossain (Lipu) (cricket), Abu Taher Batu (posthumously) and S M Aslam (football), Sabbir Yusuf (hockey), Abdus Sattar (shooting), M Raushan Ali and Squadron Leader M Rafiqul Islam (swimming), Shamima Sattar Mimmi and Razia Sultana Anu (athletics).

Presided over by Secretary,

Ministry of Youth and Sports M Nurul Huda, the function was also addressed by State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman Patal. Ministers, state ministers, MPs, high civil and military officers, sports organisers and sportsmen were also present.

The prime minister said the country has great potentials in the field of sports and underlined the need for taking proper steps for the development of the sector on a priority basis.

She said there was no alternative to games and sports to expanding talents of the younger generation and added that games and sports could play a vital role in keeping youths on the right track.

"In today's world, sports also bring diplomatic success," Khaleda said referring to the ping pong diplomacy of China in this respect. She hoped our sports organisers would play their ambassadorial role in keeping the national flag flying high.

PMO yet to clear FIRs

FROM PAGE 1

examined the FIR. However, BAC today will again send the copies of the FIR with a forwarding letter to the PMO seeking its approval.

The director general (DG) of the BAC and a director went to the PMO at yesterday noon along with FIR copies of four graft cases and returned to their office in the evening.

Sources said the officials including four deputy directors of BAC remained standby round the clock to answer to queries or assist the PMO, and to file cases with different police stations of the city in case the FIRs were approved.

High officials of bureau had a meeting with the DG at around 8:00pm. The meeting over, the DG informed other bureau officials that the PMO did not clear the FIRs. He instructed the officials to remain ready to file the cases today.

Pressured and persuaded by some bureaucrats who fear that they might be implicated in the upcoming graft cases, the PMO has taken the unusual decision to scrutinise the FIRs a few days ago.

BAC has been told that from now

on all FIRs should first be sent to the PMO before being their filing. The PMO usually grants permission to BAC for launching investigation, covert or otherwise, and filing cases.

Earlier on December 11, BAC filed a dozen graft cases against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and six of her colleagues in the past Awami League government. Around 40 former and serving bureaucrats and businessmen were also implicated in the cases.

However, BAC then was not required to send the FIRs to the PMO before filing cases with different police stations of the city for its approval.

SAARC

FROM PAGE 12

The BTMA feels that the SAARC cumulation will not give any major boost to the garment industry, rather it would cripple the spinning and weaving industries and would reduce foreign exchange earning retention. On the other hand, the BGMEA feels that the SAARC cumulation benefit for the RMG sector would bring an additional US\$500 million annually with half of its value addition.

floodlights trained on the blaze.

Twenty municipal water trucks were sent to the scene to support the firefighters. Streets in the area were ankle deep with water and long plumes of smoke rose into the night sky.

Police blocked the site to keep out looters. The fire broke out in an area of aging buildings, some of them from the colonial era, used as shops and apartments.

President Alejandro Toledo cut short a trip to the north of Peru to return to the capital. He declared Sunday and Monday national days of mourning.

Fireworks are popular in Peru during Christmas and New Year celebrations and are sold on streets throughout the capital during the season. Rospigliosi said the sale of fireworks should be banned in Peru.

BAC ineffective

FROM PAGE 1

report made by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), a chapter of the Berlin-based organisation, which identified many reasons for the ineffectiveness of the state-run body.

The reasons include weak charge-sheet and prosecution, stay order of court, lack of evidence, political unrest and influence of politicians.

These apart, there is a lack of witnesses, absence of able and reputed lawyers for prosecution, transfer of the investigative officers and administrative deadlock.

The report says that BAC has "immense problem with its inquiry and investigation stages, including negligence of officers, unnecessary delays and lack of proper planning."

Besides, the delay in obtaining permission from the higher authorities to conduct inquiry also hamper the activities of BAC, resulting in deadlock in 77 per cent corruption cases still pending.

The report revealed that 151 cases against VIPs, including ministers, MPs and high government officials, have been pending for eight years, while all political allegations of 1991-2000 are now at inquiry, investigation or prosecution levels.

Only 9.2 per cent of complaints filed with the BAC were settled in the last six years. As many as 31,746 cases were filed during 1994-2000 and only 456 cases were settled a year.

AL to protest

FROM PAGE 1

the country sometime after January 10.

In observance of the homecoming day of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the AL would hold a discussion meeting in front of the Bangabandhu Bhavan at Dhanmondi in the city on January 10.

AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman told The Daily Star last night that the ALCWC meeting also took stock of the latest socio-economic and political situation of the country.

"We urge the government to revoke the decision of price hike of fuel and other utilities that would increase people's misery," he said. "Otherwise, we'll continue our movement taking people on our side."

AL presidium member Tofail Ahmed noted that the ruling alliance raised fuel prices at a time when the same were at a very low level in the international market.

"When the AL government took a similar decision, world oil price was US\$30 per barrel. But the BNP-led government increased prices when the world prices are hovering around \$19 per barrel only," he noted.

CPA plans

FROM PAGE 12

said. Imported container cargo worth over several crores of taka were pilfered from the protected areas in last one year.

Even a fully loaded intact container was taken outside the port shed recently. This triggered a stormy situation at the port, they said.

The stolen container could not be located yet though efforts are on. In early November, imported computer accessories worth ever Tk one crore were stolen from port sheds by breaking the container.

But punitive action was hardly taken against any port staff, except formation of a probe committee, the sources said.

FROM PAGE 1

Afghanistan.

"If the situation continues to aggravate and there is an imminent threat of the use of force, Pakistan cannot but think in terms of shifting these forces from the western part to the eastern side... But we have not jumped into any conclusions. We have not taken any precipitated actions," he said to CNN.

Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said yesterday he was confident that growing international pressure would force Pakistan to act against militant groups operating from its territory.

In a meeting with the leaders of all political parties, Vajpayee said the global community was aware of India's anger in the wake of the December 13 attack on its parliament, which New Delhi has blamed on Pakistan-based militant outfits operating at the behest of Pakistani military intelligence.

"I firmly believe this will put sufficient pressure on Pakistan and it will be forced to act against the terrorist groups," Vajpayee was quoted as saying by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pramod Mahajan.

During the meeting, Mahajan said all party leaders had agreed that while every effort should be made to avert a war, India was fully prepared for any action should a conflict "be forced upon it".

Mahajan said opposition leaders had spoken in favour of pursuing diplomatic pressure and added that Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh had unveiled a series of possible further

PM happy over progress

FROM PAGE 1

Chowdhury and Mosaddek Ali and secretaries concerned were present in the meeting.

Thanking the persons concerned for the progress made in the programme, Khaleda said the 100-day programme was placed before the nation mainly for two reasons: Speedy address to the existing problems of the country and immediate start to work since there is no time to waste.

Mentioning people's overwhelming support shown through the outcome of October polls, Khaleda Zia said public expectation is high and they want a peaceful life.

She also said that her government was able to prove its overall sincerity in taking initiatives to improve law-and-order in the country.

"We did not make any concession in taking action according to law against terrorists and will not compromise in future either," she told the secretaries.

The prime minister instructed the authorities concerned to formulate cases against terrorists and criminals in a proper way to ensure their due punishment.

The prime minister said no development is possible without elimination of terrorism.

In this respect she sought cooperation of all to make successful her new initiatives to expand primary

80 held at ZIA

UNB, Dhaka

As part of a drive to stop harassment of passengers at the ZIA International Airport, police arrested 80 people on various charges from the airport area yesterday.

The arrested were produced before court later in the day, airport police said.

As harassment of passenger is on the rise at ZIA, Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury made a surprise visit to the airport and asked the law enforcing agencies to take action against the miscreants.

JCD calls hartal at Chitalmari

UNB, Bagerhat

Local unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) called a half-day hartal at Chitalmari upazila headquarters today protesting filing of a case against some JCD men.

The case was filed on Friday by a contractor following a clash between JCD and BNP cadres of Bagerhat town over toll collection from the contractor.

Murtuza murder BCL calls hartal in north Chittagong tomorrow

CU CORRESPONDENT

The Chittagong University and Hathazari thana units of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) will enforce a half-day hartal in north Chittagong tomorrow (Tuesday) protesting the killing of Ali Murtuza Chowdhury, senior vice-president of BCL CU unit.

Ali Murtuza was shot dead allegedly by Shibir cadres on Chittagong University (CU) campus Saturday evening.

Local people said there was a rivalry between Ali Murtuza and Shibir terrorist Habib Khan, Hazi Ilias and Bahadur over control of the nearby Madrassah area.

Murtuza's body was buried at his family graveyard at 5 pm yesterday.

CU BCL will hold a press conference at local press club at 11 am today (Monday) to announce the

and women education in the country.

The secretaries concerned appraised the prime minister of the progress of work in their respective fields in line with the government's 100-day agenda and said remarkable progress has been made in all sectors.

In some sectors progress has exceeded the target, they told Khaleda Zia adding that some additional but relevant programmes were also taken up outside the 100-day programme and those have also been successfully implemented.

The different issues of 100-day programme reviewed in the meeting included recovery of illegal arms, arrest of identified terrorists and starting of their trial process, formation of citizens' law and order committees at para and mahalla levels and starting legal process for releasing political prisoners and others detained without trial.

Judicial investigation process of the much talked about bomb explosions during AL rule, steps to remove indiscipline and irregularities in Chittagong and Mongla ports, identification of real causes of share scam in 1996 and initiation of a process to identify the guilty, reopening of branches of state-owned banks abroad were also reviewed.

Abducted person rescued, 5 held in Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police in separate raids in the city and in Raozan upazila in the district yesterday rescued an abducted person and arrested five kidnappers.

Acting on a tip-off, Panchlaish thana police arrested Faruk Ahmad alias Sakib, 26, and Md. Shaif, 22, two abductors of the gang, from a commercial phone shop at Didar Market of Dewan Bazar area in the city at 11:00 am.

Later, the team arrested another kidnapper Md. Rashed, 22, from a house at Katalganj Residential Area.

On the basis of their confession, the police team raided village Sultanpur under Raozan upazila at about 2.45 pm and arrested two more members of the gang and rescued Mahibullah from a house owned by Md. Masud.

The arrested two others are Shahdullah and Masud.

BCL beats up 3 JCD activists at Feni

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Feni

Three Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists were beaten up by some BCL activists at Feni Government College yesterday.

Police arrested 17 BCL activists from the college area following the incident.

Police and witnesses said BCL activists swooped on JCD activists Saiful Islam, Samsuddin and Kamaluddin on the college campus at 2-30 pm.

The JCD activists entered the campus after 12 years.

The injured were admitted to Feni Sadar Hospital.

Of the arrested BCL activists, four were identified as Hasan Habibur Rahman, Md Shahidullah, Nurul Afsar, Jasimuddin and Sunil Devnath.

Barricade

FROM PAGE 1

Others joined him in the protest.

At one stage, the MPs's son and his accomplices beat two of the agitating people. They also abducted one of the guards of BG Press and confined him inside MM Electric factory owned by the lawmaker.

Police later rescued the guard from the factory.

Later several employees of BG Press, truck drivers and local people demonstrated in the area following the incident and put up barricades on the road in protest.

Police went to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Complaint case

FROM PAGE 12

than 30 terrorists entered his house at about 10 am Friday (December 28).

They assaulted the family members and looted gold ornaments, electronic goods and cash worth Tk 20 lakh.

They also demolished the boundary wall of the house and ransacked furniture. The attackers left the scene by two police vans, the complainant alleged.

He further alleged that he had to file formal complaint with the Deputy Commissioner (DC) North of DMP as the officials at Uttara Thana refused to take the case in connection with the robbery.

After hearing, Magistrate Shafiq Anwar took the case into cognizance and directed the DC (North) to take legal action against the accused after investigation into the matter.

16 Bangladeshis held near border with Slovenia

AFP, Vienna

A group of 35 Afghan and Bangladeshis illegal immigrants were arrested near the border with Slovenia, Austrian police announced yesterday.

Twenty Afghans and 16 Bangladeshis had crossed the border on foot under cover of darkness Saturday night where police in the eastern region of Burgenland arrested them.

One of those arrested, an Afghan woman who was ill, was taken to an Austrian hospital with her four children.

The police took the other 31 members of the group back of the Slovenian border where they initially succeeded in escaping into Slovenian territory.

A few hours later an Austrian police patrol picked them up again when they attempted to re-cross the border.

India, Pakistan redeploy troops to borders

FROM PAGE 1

Afghanistan.

"What the government is also doing is to put diplomatic pressure, and nothing but taking diplomatic moves for that," he added.

Singh said India would hand Pakistan a list of militants it wants to see arrested.

The foreign minister also told the leaders that India's troop build-up along the border was a "defensive deployment" and not for launching a war with the neighbour.

In separate phone calls Saturday from his Texas ranch to Vajpayee and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, US President George W Bush urged both leaders to work to reduce tensions in the region.

But he specifically called on Musharraf to "take additional strong and decisive measures to eliminate the extremists who seek to harm India; undermine Pakistan; and provoke a war between India and Pakistan and destabilize the coalition against terrorism," said Bush spokesman Scott McClellan.

Bush told Vajpayee that the US is determined to cooperate with India in its fight against terrorism, McClellan told reporters.

Bush also reiterated his outrage over the attack on Indian parliament, calling it a strike against democracy.

measures.

"Our anxieties are mounting, not only by the day but hours, as we receive information about the movement of Indian forces on the border," Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar said yesterday.

Gen Rashid Quereshi, spokesman for Pakistan's military-led government, said all "mainstream political parties" were invited to the meeting with Musharraf that was part of consultations with various sections of society, including Islamic clerics, to discuss what he called India's aggressiveness.

The gathering did exclude the two main fundamentalist Islamic parties, Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, which organised mass protests against Musharraf in October after he decided to support the US-led coalition in Afghanistan.

Indian defence officials said Pakistani troops fired tracer bullets and mortars yesterday along the border dividing the two neighbours in Jammu and Kashmir.

"They (Pakistani troops) fired tracer bullets on Indian positions at several points along the international border... of Jammu region today," a senior defence official told Reuters, adding that the intention was to burn down Indian defence and civil installations.

The official said Pakistani troops also resorted to heavy machinegun fire on Indian positions along the line of control (LoC) in Poonch sector of the troubled state yesterday, ending a relative calm seen during the past few days.

Nighttime firing across the border with India is becoming part of daily life for villagers near the disputed border in Pakistan's Sialkot region, forcing many of them to flee inland for their safety.

The firing, on the rise along with the escalation of tensions over the divided region of Kashmir since December 13 that has all but emptied villages like Thali Kalan, less than a kilometer from the frontier.

"Firing was going on overnight and early this (Sunday) morning," Sufi Mohammad Siddiq told Reuters by telephone from Thali Kalan, which is around six kilometers from Sialkot, an industrial town in Pakistan's central Punjab province.

Pakistan freezes assests

FROM PAGE 12

Authorities said Mehmood and Majid defied service rules that apply to government scientists even after retirement, and of violating travel restrictions. They have been barred from talking with reporters of making public speeches.

AFP from Kabul says, a top Afghan minister has accused Pakistan's secret service of helping Osama bin Laden elude his pursuers -- the latest in a series of claims by Kabul that the suspected terrorist mastermind has fled across the rugged border.

"We think that when Mr Osama travels to Pakistan, it does not mean that his activities are not monitored by the ISI (Inter Services Intelligence)," Interior Minister Yunus Qanooni said Saturday in an interview with Iranian television.

"Undoubtedly they knew what was going on. The fact that there has not been any reaction and that (bin Laden) has not been arrested indicates that he is somehow being supported by the Pakistani ISI."

Qanooni quickly added that the attitude of Pakistan's leadership was "distinct to that of the ISI".

Bin Laden, he said, is successfully "playing his own game" to avoid a huge US-led manhunt by staying on the move between the two countries.

He and his followers "are mainly in Pakistan and possibly in Afghanistan", the interior minister said.

Also Saturday, an Afghan defence ministry source said the world's most wanted man was using the Pakistani city of Peshawar as a base but was constantly on the move.

On Thursday defence ministry spokesman Mohammad Habel said bin Laden crossed from the Tora Bora region of eastern Afghanistan into Pakistan about a week earlier, after the defeat of the Taliban regime which sheltered him.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar said Saturday in Islamabad he had "no information whatsoever that Osama bin Laden has come to Pakistan". The Afghan defence ministry has also urged the United States to consider halting its bombing in the country, saying the last few al-Qaida fighters have almost been wiped out at Tora Bora.

Anti-corruption body

FROM PAGE 1

by a Constitutional Council comprising the President, Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, Speaker and the Chief Justice.

Presided over by Prof. Mozaffar Ahmed, member of the TI Bangladesh chapter, the opening session was addressed by, among others, Dr Kamal Hossain, economist Dr Atiur Rahman, advisors of the immediate past caretaker government Hafizuddin Ahmed and SM Shahjahan, Chief Whip of the Jatya Sangsad Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid, former chairman of the Public Accounts Committee SM Akram, Jatya Party MP Golam Mohammad Qader and former cabinet secretary Mujibul Haque.

The opening session was followed by an open discussion. Journalist Enaeullah Khan, former MP Sudhansu Shekhor Halder, Dr KM Mohsin, Dr. Syed Anam Hossain, Faruk Khan MP, Dr. Tareq Shamsur Rahman, former director general of the Bureau of Anti-corruption Badiuzzaman and Ashif Nazrul took part in the discussion.

The speakers admitted that people of higher stature are more involved in corruption than the poor because they have no access to big deals.

The corrupt people are becoming most influential in all areas -- from politics to administration. "So, what benefit the commonman will get from the corrupt persons?" questioned many of the discussants.

The meeting however could not reach a consensus on the appointing authority of the proposed commission.

Summing up the discussion, Prof Mozaffar Ahmed said the existing Bureau of Anti-corruption can not make use of its full potency due to lack of independence.

"The nation has been paying a lot due to dangerous corruption that ruins the economy of the populous, small and poor country," said Ahmed who moderated the two sessions.

He termed corruption a "crime against humanity" and identified this as one of