

Hasina slams gas tariff hike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday protested the increase in gas tariff, which she said will cause fresh sufferings for the people.

In a statement, she said the government has increased the tariff not to rationalise the price, but to meet its own interest. Terming the decision anti-people, the statement stated that the incumbent coalition government is raising the gas tariff in a bid to create an atmosphere to export the country's gas.

The opposition leader further said people would foil any move by the government to export gas overlooking the country's interest.

On Monday last, the government made an upward revision of gas tariff for the second time in seven months. Earlier in January, the government raised the tariff by 4.62 per cent. As per the government decision, the new rate took effect on September 1.

Hasina also came down hard on the government for banning the two-stroke three-wheelers on the city streets without taking alternative arrangement.

She also condemned the government for the seizure of the satellite equipment of the Ekushy

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Meeting of BNP's Barisal, Khulna reps today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling BNP holds a daylong meeting of the field level leaders of Khulna and Barisal divisions at the Prodnan Monir Bhaban today.

The meeting is a part of the current move to strengthen organisational activities and expand party network.

BNP Chairperson and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will chair the meeting and spend the day with the leaders at the grassroots. Joint Secretary General of the BNP Tarique Rahman will supervise the meeting.

Representatives from the party's district, municipality and thana units and its different front organisations are expected to attend the meeting, party sources said.

The meeting, to be attended by some 1000 representatives from the two divisions, begins at 10:00am.

All members of the BNP Standing Committee and vice presidents and joint secretaries general of the party

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Vacation bench refuses to accept writ challenging resignation of B'Chowdhury

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday refused to entertain a writ petition challenging the resignation of former president Dr AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury and told the lawyers concerned to move the petition before a regular bench of the High Court.

The petition was moved before a vacation bench of the High Court comprising Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana.

Oil Ahad, a renowned politician of the country filed the writ petition and Dr Akhter Hamid moved the petition on behalf of the petitioner.

BPC services declared essential

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has declared services of all categories of jobs of the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) and its subsidiaries as essential under the Essential Services Ordinance of 1958, a government notification said yesterday.

The services of all workers and officials of Padma Oil Company Limited, Jamuna Oil Company Limited, LP Gas Limited, Standard Asiatic Oil Company Limited, Eastern Lubricants Blending Limited and Eastern Refinery Limited, said the notification issued by the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

The order came into effect from yesterday and would remain valid for the next six months.

New rule for large loans

Banks must go for consortium if credit amount crosses 50pc of paid-up capital

SHAHRIAR KARIM

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) has made it mandatory for banks to go for consortium in sanctioning loans over 50 per cent of their paid-up capitals to a person or a single group.

Also, a bank cannot sanction direct credit of more than 30 per cent of its paid-up capital to a person or a single group. The remaining 20 per cent loan facility can be given as non-funded credit like letter of credit or through other instruments.

However, the new rule, made effective from yesterday, will not be applicable to public organisations that take loans against government guarantee. Earlier the banks were free to provide loan facilities up to 100 per cent of its paid-up capital to a person or a group taking clearance from the Bangladesh Bank.

The authorities have taken the move to check the trend of centralisation of a bank's total loan portfolio to a few persons or business groups and also minimise risks of large loans, according to sources.

According to banking sources, a major portion of the loans of a number of private banks has become non-performing, due to exposure to a few persons or business groups who often pressure those banks into sanctioning loans and rescheduling those.

The central bank move came after management of different banks had requested it to bring changes to large loan rules. Any loan that crosses 15 per cent of a bank's paid-up capital is considered as large loan.

A committee of commercial banks' managing directors, headed by Khondokar Ibrahim Khaled, Pubali Bank MD, submitted a proposal to the BB proposing changes to large loan rules.

The BB issued a circular yesterday and asked all banks to bring down the limit of large loans already sanctioned to a person or a single group within 50 per cent of their paid-up capitals.

The banks that have working loans of more than 50 per cent of their paid-up capitals to a person or a single group will have to bring those down within the limit by December 2003. In case of term loans, the banks have till December 2004 to comply with the new rule.

"As the earlier policy was very risky for the banks, we brought the changes to check centralisation of a bank's loans to a few person or business group," BB Deputy Governor Nazrul Huda said.

In India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, he said, banks can sanction loan up to 20-30 per cent of the paid-up capital to a person or a single group.

"The new rule will encourage the banks to sanction loans on the basis of consortium that will ensure quality of loans and transparency in the loan

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DU teachers against party-linked politics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar at Dhaka University yesterday called upon teachers and students of universities to do healthy politics, forsaking the present party-affiliated politics.

To do politics is a fundamental right and government cannot ban this. But the present trend of party-affiliated politics must be stopped, they said.

At the same time, performance of university teachers should be regularly evaluated, they said.

The seminar on 'what the university should be', held at the TSC, was organised by some neutral teachers of DU.

Zahid Hassan Chowdhury of Political Science Department and Robayet Ferdous of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of DU presented two key-note papers at the seminar.

The speakers also criticised "mushroom growth" of private universities in the country, saying most of those have no faculty befitting a university as those are profit oriented.

Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury said university teachers may have political opinion but should not act "irrationally" as per programme or ideas of any political party.

Stressing accountability of teachers, Dean of Social Science Faculty of DU Prof Asaduzzaman said action could not be taken against some teachers of the university for not taking classes for long as they had strong political affiliation with political parties.

Prof Kazi Shahidullah, Dean of Arts Faculty, said most of the vice-chancellors of universities got the posts due to their loyalty to the ruling party. Such a VC can not run the university administration properly, he maintained.

Prof Nasim Akhter Hossain of Jahangirnagar University said the ruling party is trying to "capture" all the universities to throttle the voice of opposition political parties.

Prof Moinul Islam of Chittagong University described private universities as 'profit oriented coaching centres, not centres of excellence'.

Prof Abidur Reza of Bangladesh Agricultural University said private universities do not impart basic education, they train students in some specific subjects.

Prof Anu Muhammad of Jahangirnagar University wondered how teachers would perform their jobs if government throttles their voices.

He said, under the University Ordinance of 1973, there is scope to make teachers accountable, retaining their full freedom.

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BNP activist allegedly gangraped by 3 partymen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Akuli Rani, 40, an activist of BNP and former member of Mithakhali Union Parishad in Mongla upazilla, was allegedly gangraped by three youngmen at midnight on Sunday.

Police later arrested the alleged rapists. They are BNP activists Nasir Molla, Enamul Molla and Zakir Shaikh.

According to Mongla Thana OC, the youngmen went to the house of Akuli Rani and told her that general secretary of Mongla Upazilla unit of BNP and former chairman of Mithakhali Union Parishad Molla Abdul Jalil, wanted to discuss organisational matters with her. Akuli Rani came out of her house with them.

When Akuli Rani along with the three youngmen reached Khasherdanga village in Mithakhali

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Dhaka, Beijing agree to enhance economic cooperation

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh and China, at their foreign ministers' level talks, yesterday agreed to further enhance economic cooperation between the two countries to help maintain peace and stability.

During the official talks both sides discussed the entire gamut of bilateral, political and economic relations and reviewed the international situation and regional issues.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and his Chinese counterpart Tang Jiaxuan described Bangladesh-China relations as excellent.

They agreed that maintenance of peace and stability globally and regionally were important for the economic development of the toiling masses of the developing

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PHOTO: STAR

The vandalised information centre at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital. Outraged by the death of a fellow, Dhaka University students ransacked the hospital and assaulted a senior doctor and two guards.

EARTH SUMMIT 2002

Kyoto Protocol in clear

Russia, Canada, Japan, China spell out support

AFP, Johannesburg

The troubled UN pact on global warming got a big boost at the Earth Summit yesterday when Russia followed Canada in promising it would ratify the Kyoto Protocol soon, and Japan and China spelled out their support.

Ratification by Russia will mean that the climate change pact will take effect, despite US opposition to it.

The pact is designed to reduce the emission of so-called "greenhouse gases" which prevent heat from radiating out into space, causing temperatures to rise worldwide, with resultant droughts and the melting of the ice-caps, causing the sea-level to rise.

"Russia has signed the Kyoto Protocol and now we are preparing for its ratification. This ratification we hope will occur in the very near future," Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov said in a speech at the 10-day summit in Johannesburg.

In Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin said: "We are positive about this process and the aims of the Kyoto protocol. We intend to ratify."

On Monday, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien said the Canadian

parliament would be asked to vote on ratification "before the end of this year".

Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji told the summit that China had deposited its instrument of ratification with the United Nations on August 30.

"The Chinese government attaches great importance to climate change. In recent years, the Chinese government at all levels has exerted tremendous efforts to address this problem," said a statement issued by the Chinese delegation.

In an apparent appeal to Russia, it added: "China hopes that other developed countries will ratify or approve the protocol as soon as possible so as to enable it to enter into force within this year."

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said his country would "do its utmost" to persuade countries to ratify Kyoto, as the accord was vital for tackling global warming under a common set of rules.

One of the most complex environmental treaties ever attempted, Kyoto requires industrialised countries -- but not developing ones -- to make spe

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia talks to leaders of the four-party alliance during a meeting at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

Khaleda tells leaders Make 4-party alliance stronger, dynamic

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday asked the leaders and workers of the ruling four-party alliance to guard against the move of the vested quarters to destabilise the political situation in the country.

She also asked them to make the alliance stronger and dynamic at all levels for ensuring welfare of the common people. The Prime Minister expressed her views during a meeting with the alliance leaders at her office in the afternoon.

The meeting decided to jointly celebrate the completion of one-year of the alliance government.

Secretary General of BNP and Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh and Agriculture Minister Maulana Matiur Rahman Nizami, IOJ Chairman Shaikhul Hadith Azizul Huq and President of Bangladesh Jatiya Party Nazir Rahman Manju were present at the meeting.

Other leaders and liaison committee members who attended the meeting included Land Minister M

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Dacoity at two houses in city

BSS, Dhaka

Armed dacoits yesterday looted money, gold ornaments and car parts and other valuables worth about Taka 17 lakh from two houses at Shewrapara in the city's Mirpur and Banani areas.

Mirpur police quoting family sources said a gang of armed dacoits entered the 882/2 West Shewrapara residence of businessman Parvez Selim by cutting its grills at about 4 am.

The gang confined the inmates of the house in a room at gunpoint and looted Taka 90,000, gold ornaments and other valuables worth about Taka 4,90,000 from the house.

In another incident, a gang of dacoits entered the house at 92, Road 13/A, Block-C at Banani after scaling the boundary wall at about 6 am and tied up the guard of the house with an electric pole.

The dacoits looted parts of three cars kept in the garage of the house. The estimated price of the looted parts is over Taka 12 lakh.

Two separate cases were filed with Mirpur and Gulshan police stations.

Bus driver shot dead in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A bus driver was shot dead by unidentified assailants at his house at village Amirghona under Lohagara upazila in the early of yesterday.

The victim was identified as Bashiruddin, 38.

Police said, a gang of seven stormed into the house of Bashir at about 1-30am and sprayed bullets on him. He died on the spot.

A case has been filed with Lohagara thana in this regard.

Lawyers threaten greater movement if demands not met

Work abstention on Sept 5

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lawyers will observe work abstention throughout the country on September 5 to press their six-point demand including withdrawal of enhanced court fee and stamp duty.

They will go for a "greater movement soon" if the demands are not met. Barrister Amir-Ul-Islam, convener of the Six Point Implementation Parishad of Lawyers

said at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) office here yesterday. The Parishad represents all bar associations in the country.

The other demands of the Parishad include setting up a 'judicial service commission' for separation of the judiciary from the executive and scrapping of all "black laws" including the Special Powers Act, Public Safety Act and the recently enacted Law and Order Disruption Crimes (Speedy Trial) Act.

Lawyers earlier observed work abstention on August 8 for withdrawal of the enhanced fee and duty.

Barrister Amir-Ul-Islam urged the government not to consider court

fee as 'a tool for revenue earning'. The judiciary is a 'service sector', he said.

Reading out a written statement, he urged the government to take steps immediately to strengthen the judicial service for speedy trial of cases. This will tremendously help improvement of the law and order situation and benefit the people, he said.

Explaining the loopholes in "black laws", he said these create scope for their abuse, making public life "miserable".

The Parishad also demanded legal safeguards against abuse of Section 54 and Section 167 of the Criminal Procedure Code by law enforcers.

Amir-Ul-Islam said appointment of magistrates as judges after separation of the judiciary from the executive will not help the judiciary to work independently. Lawyers will strongly protest if the government takes any such move, he said.

Judges should be appointed with "utmost sincerity and being free from any political bias", he said.

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Hunger strike, agitation by BUET students on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 60 students of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) yesterday passed their second day of fast unto death programme on the campus to press their seven-point demand.

Two students -- Ahsan Habib of Electrical Engineering and Moinuddin of Industry and Production -- were given intravenous saline as they became sick, the agitating students said.

Police cordoned off the hunger strikers since they began their programme at about 8 am on Monday under the banner of 'BUET Students Unity Against Atrocities'.

Their seven-point demand include trial of the killers of BUET student Sabequn Nahar Sony, scrapping of the BUET ordinance of 1961 that bars political activities on the campus and withdrawal of expulsion order on 12 students.

Guardians of some of the hunger-striking students wanted to meet their son and daughters but police did not allow them to enter the campus, sources said. Police are allowing students into the campus, checking their identity cards.

A group of students staged a demonstration on the campus yesterday afternoon carrying placards and chanting slogans for meeting the seven-point demand.

Some teachers of BUET met the hunger-striking students and asked them to solve their "problems" through talks. The students said they will talk with the BUET authorities if they are assured that their demands will be fulfilled.

BUET students of Batch 99 of Architecture and of Batch 98 of Electrical Engineering will boycott classes from today and join the hunger strike, sources said.

Some teachers of Dhaka and Jahangirnagar universities also met the hunger-striking students and expressed their solidarity with them.

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