

Hasina urges army to foil 'gas export bid'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Sheikh Hasina has alerted the army to the ruling alliance's move to use them in its bid to sell out the country's gas resource for 'kickbacks'.

"They (alliance government) are initiating a gas export contract just because they hanker after kickbacks. But you (army) are there to protect our independence, sovereignty and also the national resources. Gas is our national resource and you (army) have to protect it," Hasina said while speaking at a memorial meeting in the city yesterday.

Reiterating her demand that the Khaleda government step down immediately, the Awami League (AL) president said the army would not succeed in ferreting out criminals as long it goes by the government-made list of criminals.

"If the residences of ministers, lawmakers, the prime

minister's son and her brother are searched, many criminals can be tracked down," the former prime minister said.

The youth front of her party, Awami Jubo League, organised the meeting at Jatiya Press Club auditorium commemorating the martyrdom of Noor Hossain and Babul who were killed in the anti-autocracy movement on November 10, 1987.

Addressing a capacity audience who turned up ignoring torrential rains, the AL chief said the army could nab actual criminals if they would take a 'list from the victims' during the one year rule of the BNP-led government.

Expressing deep concern at the 25 deaths during the ongoing anti-crime drive, Hasina warned the prime minister that she has to bear the responsibility for this.

She wanted to know how many illegal weapons have so far been confiscated. In this regard, she quoted

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Iftar party Jamaat drops Ershad at the last moment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jamaat-e-Islami cancelled former president HM Ershad's invitation to an iftar party at the last moment yesterday.

Jamaat, an affiliate of the four-party alliance, arranged the party yesterday at the Sonargaon Hotel for politicians, newspaper editors and professionals.

Chairman of the Jatiya Party Ershad and Secretary General Ruhul Amin Howladar were among the invitees.

Howladar confirmed their attendance on the phone to Jamaat Amir and Agriculture Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami, said sources.

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Iraqi parliament says no to UN resolution

Saddam has the final say

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq's parliament yesterday voted unanimously to reject a tough UN disarmament resolution seen as a last chance to avoid war, but agreed to leave the final word to President Saddam Hussein.

In a sign that Saddam might override MPs and accept the UN Security Council's unanimous ultimatum, his elder son Uday, who is himself an MP, urged acceptance,

albeit with certain provisos.

France meanwhile upped the pressure on the Iraqi leader, by giving its clearest signal yet that it might support military action against Baghdad, despite its earlier opposition to an automatic resort to force.

Speaker Saadun Hammadi announced the results of the two separate votes in parliament, both conducted by a show of hands.

The 250-member parliament had met for a second day to decide on a

recommendation from its Arab and international relations committee to reject Resolution 1441, despite Uday's call to agree to the UN text.

Hammadi told the press shortly before the vote that "from what I can see, there is a unanimous position that the National Assembly cannot accept the resolution, and will reject it."

In a separate vote, MPs also decided to "mandate the political leadership... and Saddam... to do

what they deem fit to defend the great people of Iraq."

Uday, who runs an influential media empire, made clear he thought his father should accept the UN resolution, albeit "according to well-defined limits".

He also called on the Arab League to provide an "umbrella" for Iraq, and demanded that Arab experts be part of the disarmament

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Navy men beat OC, doctor in Cox's Bazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three persons including Officer-in-charge (OC) of Moheshkhali Police Station Mohiuddin and a local physician were allegedly beaten up by navy personnel in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

Sources said the incident was the result of an affair between a medical representative and the daughter of an ex-army person.

Sources said the ex-army man, Saleh Ahmed, had an altercation with a physician, Dr. Pranab Bikash, on November 8 over the affair of his daughter with a medical representative, Aminul Islam Shwadeen.

Shwadeen works with the physici

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Toll collection by cops Transport owners seek army protection

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The road transport owners and workers have urged the army to stop extortion by local hoodlums and toll collection by police at various points on the highways.

The road transport owners and workers made the request during a series of discussions with the army high-ups yesterday and day before yesterday. The transport owners said although toll collection by local gangsters has reduced to some extent since the anti-crime crackdown, there is no respite from extortion by police, according to sources.

According to sources, Convenor

of Bangladesh Truck-Tank Lorry Malik Sramik Oikya Parishad Rustom Ali Khan and Member Secretary Mahub Chowdhury Santu were called in to Dhaka Cantonment yesterday for a detailed discussion on the matter.

They alleged that police officials often collect tolls from trucks and tank lorries on various pretexts like overloading, lack of fitness certificate, wrong parking and so on.

They said although goods-carrying trucks aged over 25 years are allowed to ply the city roads after 8:00 at night since July 1, the Bangladesh Road Transport

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Robbers loot Tk 8 lakh from Lever Brothers distributor

BSS, Ctg

Agang of armed robbers looted Tk 8 lakh from the local distributor of a multi-national company in the city's Nasirabad area Monday night.

Police said they arrested six people from different parts of Panchlaish in connection with the incident.

According to witnesses and police, a gang of 20 robbers entered AS Enterprise, a local distributor of Lever Brothers Bangladesh Limited in Nasirabad Housing Society area at around 7.30 pm.

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PHOTO: STAR

Delegates of the Local Consultative Group (LCG) led by Country Director of the World Bank (WB) Frederick T Temple meet with LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at his secretariat office yesterday.

Defamation case Jugantor editor, others get bail

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday issued rule asking the government to show cause in two weeks why the editor of The Daily Jugantor Golam Sarwar, publisher Jamaluna Islam and chairman of Jamuna Group Nurul Islam Babul should not be granted permanent bail in a criminal case.

The court granted them anticipatory bail till disposal of the rule.

A division bench comprising Justice Mohammad Abdur Rasid and Justice Mohammad Siddiqur Rahman Miah passed the order.

Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas filed a defamation case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Court on Sunday against the editor and publisher of the daily and chairman of Jamuna Group regarding publication of a report on November 6 linking him with slain criminal Kala Faruk.

Abbas alleged that the newspaper, which belongs to the Jamuna Group owned by Babul, greatly humiliated him tarnishing his political and social image by publishing the "false, fabricated and concocted story."

After hearing the petition, the Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Emdadul Huq issued arrest warrant against editor, publisher of the daily and chairman of Jamuna Group.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Nov 13		5-14 pm
Nov 14	6-12 am	

Prayer Timings		
Nov 13		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-50	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-17	5-27
Esha	7-30	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Prepaid phone tangled

ABU SAEED KHAN

The government is losing a minimum of Tk 58 lakh in revenues a month, as a licensed operator has been barred from launching the country's first prepaid calling card service (PCCS).

Both local and international calls can be made from any landline telephone with the help of PCCS. These cards will be sold with various denominations and each card will have a unique code.

The PCCS customer will scratch the card to get the code and dial the digits from a landline telephone.

The PCCS user will get another dial tone and then make local or international calls from the landline phone. But the landline phone will not be charged, as the standard tariff gets deducted from the prepaid calling card.

If the PCCS had been in operation, it would have helped the people who cannot afford a telephone. The majority of cell phone subscribers without any access to the fixed phone network could also benefit from it.

Prepaid calling card is a popular telecom service in most of the

countries around the world, including India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

On April 17, 2001, the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MoPT) licensed five companies through a competitive bidding to operate prepaid calling card services.

The companies are Omnicom Limited, Coronet Corporation, Cosmos Telecom, Uttara Telecom and Formula One International.

Only Formula One signed an operating agreement with the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) in June 2001.

The company installed its prepaid equipment at BTTB's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar telephone exchange and paid Tk 32.50 lakh to interconnect.

It also paid Tk 5 lakh in annual licence fees twice - to the MoPT and the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC). Additionally, the company submitted a bank guarantee of Tk 50 lakh in favour of the MoPT in anticipation that the company will generate calls of equivalent amount a month. So, every month the government is

losing this amount in addition to the value added tax of 15 per cent on the calls.

Last March, the BTTB officials tested the prepaid equipment and gave a go-ahead to Formula One. But the authorities are yet to allow Formula One to launch its prepaid calling card service.

SATM Badrul Haque, BTTB chairman, said his department would have no control over the sales of prepaid cards by the five PCCS operators. He apprehends that an operator might sell crores of taka worth of cards and close down its business. "How will the BTTB realise the bills then?" he says.

The BTTB chairman requested the MoPT to stipulate the provision of a deposit in the operating agreement with Formula One. "But the ministry is yet to reply, as the Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC) has confiscated the PCCS file," he said.

The BTTB chairman also blamed Formula One for not providing the "toll free" customer service in the prepaid system.

But Mazhar Masood, chairman

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DCC tender scam No probe body formed yet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) did not form any committee until yesterday to investigate the alleged irregularities in collection of tender schedules.

On Sunday, DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka at a press briefing declared that a committee would be formed next day to investigate the irregularities.

At the briefing, he assured journalists that he would take steps to form the committee in consultation with LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan.

But sources in the ministry yesterday said the DCC did not send any written message to the ministry about it yet.

Neither the mayor nor AZM Shafiqul Islam, DCC's chief executive officer, could be contacted for comments despite repeated efforts yesterday.

Meanwhile, some newspapers have reported that the possibility of the probe-committee formation is slim, as the authorities are trying to save some influential people who manipulated the tendering process.

On October 12, the DCC invited tenders worth over Tk 93 crore for road repairs, with October 28 as the deadline for submission of schedules.

But the newspapers reported on widespread irregularities in collection and submission of the schedules. Many DCC-listed contractors could not collect tender schedules, as the musclemen of ward commissioners manipulated the whole process, said reports.

Contacted, some top officials of the DCC said they did not know if the committee would be formed. And some kept mum over the issue.

The 'benefited section' will not let any committee be formed, sources said. A DCC top official preferring anonymity told The Daily Star that the

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