



OFFICE COPY
CIRCULAR

The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

Plus Rising Stars



TO
People's Right to Know

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XVIII No. 154

DHAKA THURSDAY JUNE 19, 2008

www.thedailystar.net

ASHAR 5, 1415 BS

JAMADIU SANI 14, 1429 HIRI

24 PAGES PLUS RISING STARS PRICE: TK 10.00

Govt mulls oil, gas price hike

UNB, Dhaka

The government is actively considering increasing oil and gas prices against the backdrop of soaring prices on the international market.

"We're assessing the impact of price adjustment on different sectors of the economy. But I should not say when such an announcement will come," Chief Adviser's Special Assistant for Power and Energy Dr M Tamim yesterday said.

He spoke to reporters on the sidelines of a seminar on "The Need of Energy Producers and the Government's Perspective" at Hotel Sonargaon, organised by the International Business Forum of Bangladesh.

The government has doubled the price of compressed natural gas (CNG) barely a month ago. Now it is considering raising the prices of gas and fuel oil, sources said.

Dr Tamim informed the seminar that Petrobangla could not make regular payments to international oil companies because of lower gas price. Similarly, Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation is selling

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Graft increases despite ongoing drive: TIB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Corruption in education, health, land administration, local government and in different utility services sectors increased in the first half of 2007 despite the caretaker government's anti-corruption drives, a survey by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) found.

In terms of magnitude, law enforcing agencies including the joint forces, police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) were found to be the most corrupt while land administration was found the most corrupt in terms of the amount of bribe that went into any sector, according to the National Household Survey on Corruption 2007.

Bribery claimed 3.84 percent of per capita income of the country during the period.

The survey however found that corruption decreased between January and June of 2007 in law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, and in the power, banking

Bribe claimed Tk 5,543cr during July 2006-June 2007
Corruption severity during CG tenure same as before
Graft rose in edn, health, land admin, local govt, NGOs
Law enforcers, land admin most corrupt
5,000 households in 62 districts surveyed

and tax sectors compared to the records of previous six months.

"The severity of corruption, as we have seen during the past two elected governments' tenures, still exists. This is a very disappointing scenario," TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said while releasing the report yesterday.

The fourth in the series of regular surveys conducted every two years, the latest surveyed 5,000 households -- 2,000 in urban areas and the rest in rural areas in 62

districts -- on incidents of corruption that took place between July 2006 and June 2007.

"The people of the country had to pay Tk 5,443 crore in bribes for different public and private sector services. No major distinction was found in the magnitude of corruption in urban and rural areas, which is a proof of the deep rooted nature of the menace," said Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, chairman of the TIB trustee board.

The survey revealed that 96.6 percent the households experienced harassment and corruption while interacting with or receiving services from law enforcing agencies.

Ninety four percent of them experienced harassment and corruption from police, 4.9 percent from the joint forces, and 8 percent from Rab.

Each household paid Tk 10,927 in bribe to avoid arrest while Tk 3,983 and Tk 795 had to be paid for lodging a complaint and general

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

ATTACK ON AL RALLY Govt asked to put ad to bring Huji cadres to court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday directed the authorities to publish an advertisement in two national Bangla dailies asking the eight absconding Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji) cadres accused in the grenade attack on Awami League (AL) rally murder case to appear before it by June 26.

Meanwhile another Dhaka court on June 23 will decide on the acceptance of the charge sheet against the 22 accused, including detained former deputy minister and BNP leader Abdus Salam Pintu, in the second case filed in connection with the same attack.

MURDER CASE Chief Metropolitan Magistrate AKM Enamul Haque, after receipt of the reports on arrest warrants issued earlier against the eight accused, passed the order for publishing an advertisement in two national dailies.

The eight absconding accused are Pintu's brothers Maulana

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

CITY CORPORATION POLLS

EPR to be relaxed tomorrow to allow rallies, campaigns

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The caretaker government is going to relax the Emergency Powers Rules (EPR) tomorrow allowing rallies and processions for election campaigns in city corporations and municipalities where polls will be held in phases under the state of emergency.

LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal yesterday said the government is now mulling which sections of the EPR should be relaxed and will declare it on the day the Election Commission (EC) announces the schedules for polls to four city corporations and nine municipalities.

The polls schedules are due to be announced tomorrow as per an EC decision earlier.

Directed by government policymakers, senior officials of the

ministries of Home Affairs and LGRD are finalising the procedure to relax the EPR in consultation with the EC Secretariat, highly placed sources said.

"Relaxation of the EPR will remain in force from the day of announcement of polls schedule for city corporations and municipalities till publication of the polls results in official gazette," one source said quoting the draft notification on relaxing the EPR.

"But the polls campaigns must be carried out in compliance with the election rules and code of conduct for the polls," he said.

The draft notification provides for relaxation of certain stringent provisions of the EPR that banned political rallies or meetings since declaration of the state of emergency on January 11, 2007, the source mentioned.

The home ministry will issue the notification in exercise of the authority given on it in September last year when the government first relaxed the EPR allowing indoor politics only in the capital to facilitate holding of the EC-initiated electoral reform talks.

Senior officials at the EC Secretariat said stringent provisions in the new election rules and code of conduct for polls to local government bodies are enough to ensure law and order when the EPR is relaxed in the areas where polls will take place.

The EC announces tomorrow schedules for polls in the city corporations of Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet, and nine municipalities by the end of July or early in August.

The nine municipalities are

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) is spending Tk 4 crore on constructing a bridge over Shibhu river at Tanore in Rajshahi without building any approach roads on either side of the river.

ANOTHER LGED SHAM

Bridge built without approach road

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) is constructing a bridge on the Shibhu River at Tanore upazila, Rajshahi at a cost of about Tk 4 crore without building any approach road on either side.

LGED officials said the 210-metre bridge was designed during the BNP-Jamaat rule as the then prime minister pledged the construction of a 10-km road between Soipara of Mohonpur upazila and Gollapara of Tanore upazila.

The Daily Star conducted a spot visit recently when columns of the under-construction bridge were seen in the middle of the 1.5-km-wide river.

The bridge has no road link between Gollapara Bazar, one km from the bridge, and the road to Soipara which is 1.5-km away. Also the LGED does not own land around the bridge to be able to construct approach road.

"The bridge is urgently needed

for boosting local business and other convenience but without proper roads it will be nothing but waste of money," said Sukumar Roy, a local fish trader who was seen crossing the river on a boat with his fish.

Halfway into the work, LGED recently sent a proposal to the ministry concerned for acquiring private land of a beel and government land of the river to build the approach road, said LGED officials.

After its approval, the approach road would be built filling a part of the river, they said.

The Tk 3.92-crore bridge construction work was awarded to a Rajshahi-based construction firm, owned by Khandaker Mainul Hossain, vice-president of Rajshahi district BNP and vice-president of Rajshahi Chamber of Commerce and Industries, in January, 2006.

In March, 2006, former postal and telecommunication minister

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Right to information ordinance okayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet yesterday approved in principle the Right to Information (RTI) Ordinance, 2008 to ensure free flow of information to the people.

The cabinet sent back the draft of the Right to Information (RTI) Ordinance, suggesting a few changes in its wording, rewriting a few clauses and merging some sections, said sources.

After making the changes, the information ministry, which initiated the move, will have to get the draft vetted by the law ministry before placing it before the cabinet for final approval, the sources added.

A few of the existing 38 sections in the draft may be merged together, said sources.

The eight-member ordinance drafting committee of the information ministry had proposed a five-member information commission, which the cabinet decided to have three

members.

"Of the three, one will be a female member," chief adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim told reporters after a cabinet meeting at the chief adviser's office yesterday.

As part of its institutional reforms, the caretaker government took the initiative to formulate the law with an aim to "empower people as well as ensure transparency, accountability and establish good governance".

According to the draft, the government and other institutions using public funds will have to provide people with necessary information within 20 days of applying for it.

The approval came after a long discussion at the cabinet meeting with Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in the chair. The meeting started at 3:30pm and continued until 6:15pm.

All advisers to the caretaker government, except for the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

AL, allies to take part in local govt polls

HASAN JAHD TUSHER

The Awami League (AL) along with other components of its grand electoral alliance will take part in the upcoming city corporation and local government elections.

The AL, which had been demanding holding of the national election first, will ask its grassroots level leaders in a few days to send a list of candidates for the elections to the city corporations, upazila parishads and municipalities to finalise the nominations, AL leaders said.

Party insiders said since the grassroots level leaders want to take part in the local government elections, there is no scope for

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Janajuddha founder killed in 'shootout'

His woman accomplice also killed

AMANUR AMAN, from Kushtia

Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Tapan alias Dada Tapan, founder of outlawed Janajuddha, was killed in a 'shootout' with Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in the early hours yesterday.

A woman reportedly from the 'women wing' of the outfit also died during the shootout.

The Rab recovered huge arms and ammunition including one AK47, books and leaflets of the banned outfit and also arrested Tapan's elder brother Akash.



Abdur Rashid Malitha

Operatives of the outlawed communist outfits see the death as another blow to their two-decade underground "armed struggle" in the south and northern regions to establish socialism after the death of Mofakkar Hossain, founder of Purbanga Communist Party (PBCP-ML), in 2004.

Mofakkar was killed in 'crossfire' when Rab members came under attack in Kushtia on December 17, 2004.

Tapan was leading Janajuddha, one of the factions of PBCP-ML,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Lift emergency by this month Demands BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday renewed its call to the government for lifting the state of emergency within this month and holding parliamentary elections by October.

Reiterating the demand for general elections ahead of any other polls, party leaders also said if the government does not resolve these issues, they would announce agitation programmes.

"National election should be held first since holding any other election is beyond the jurisdiction of the caretaker government," said Khandaker Delwar Hossain.

The BNP secretary general was talking to journalists following a meeting with the visiting Election

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Govt reviews blanket amnesty to prisoners

Convicts of small crimes will now be freed upon serving half of prison terms

KAILASH SARKAR

The caretaker government's June 9 decision to give a blanket amnesty to convicts who already served a half of their prison terms was changed recently.

The change in the decision came after the government had been awoken by the jail authorities to the pernicious side of the blanket amnesty which would create opportunities for convicted Islamist terrorists of banned

Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh and Harkatul Jihad al-Islami to be free if they had already served a half of their terms of imprisonment.

According to the latest decision only the convicts who already served a half of their prison terms of seven years or less for minor offences will be eligible for the amnesty.

"Convicts who are in prisons for sedition, terrorism, murder, robbery, repression of women and children, and in connection with

explosives and firearms cases will not be considered for the amnesty," Deputy Inspector General of Prisons (DIG-Prisons) Maj Shamsul Haider Siddique told The Daily Star adding, "Minor offences include theft, suspected stealing and snatching."

He also said, "People who were convicted in more than one cases will also not be eligible for the amnesty."

Meanwhile, the authorities of

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

POWER PLANT CASE Hasina's trial adjourned until July 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday adjourned the trial of the barge-mounted power plant case filed against former premier and Awami League (AL) president Sheikh Hasina and six others till July 1, as a petition to quash the case is pending at the High Court (HC).

Judge M Firoz Alam of Special Court-1 passed the order after hearing arguments from the prosecution and the defence.

Hasina's attorney advocate Abdul Mannan Khan told reporters, "Since the case documents are not in this court, the court fixed the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

CG's popularity has dipped to 'minus zero', says Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained former prime minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said the popularity of this caretaker government has come down to 'minus zero'.

"It was told earlier that the popularity of the government was at the peak, but now after reading newspapers it seems that its popularity has come down to zero. But I say the government's popularity has slid down not at zero but at minus zero," she told journalists after the trial proceedings in Niko

graft case against her and 10 others at a special court.

Judge Khandaker Kamal Uz-zaman of Special Court-9 set up on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises rejected the defence plea for adjourning the case and amid heated row set June 26 the next date for hearing on charge framing in the case.

Khaleda was produced before the court at 10:20am amid tight security.

Criticising the trial in special court, Khaleda said the trial should

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Clarification

Referring to The Daily Star news published yesterday headlined "Offshore Hydrocarbon Exploration: India, Myanmar raise objection to bidders", Dr Kamal Hossain and Associates clarified the firm's position about not giving their legal opinions to Petrobangla on the off-shore block bidding.

In a written statement the law firm said, "We have had the opportunity to advise Petrobangla on specific matters from time to time, but we have never been engaged as Petrobangla's legal adviser. Secondly, in relation to the off-shore bidding 2008, we were not required to provide any opinion concerning the bid. Petrobangla wishes to refer a few specific questions for our review and, in relation to those matters, the precise issues on which our assistance would be required are still being discussed with Petrobangla."



PHOTO: STAR

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) has begun an eviction drive in hilly areas prone to landslides. Picture shows shanties built in risky spots while a CCC staff (inset) uses a bullhorn asking slum dwellers to vacate their homes.

CCC evicts shanty dwellers from risky spots in Matijharna

CU CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) has started the eviction of shanty dwellers from hilly areas of Matijharna and Batali Hill, evicting residents of a total of 200 shanties till yesterday.

CCC has been carrying out the drive to evict people living at risky spots near the many hills in the area to avert the repetition of landslides that claimed a total of 127 lives in Chittagong on June 11 last year.

CCC authorities began the drive on Sunday, and yesterday also used bullhorns at Matijharna in Lalkhan Bazar asking residents to vacate

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1