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ENERGY SECTOR Eminent citizens slate 'anti-people' activities of govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-two eminent personalities yesterday called upon the caretaker government to stop its 'anti-people, anti-constitutional and illegal activities' in dealing with the country's energy resources.

It is essential to establish people's control over country's energy resources as their prosperity largely depends on proper utilisation of those, they said in a joint statement yesterday.

"We are observing that the undemocratic government has been suppressing people's voice to go ahead with its anti-people agenda keeping the state of emergency in force," they said.

Referring to the proposals made by Prof Abdul Matin Patwary-led committee for making some amendments to the coal policy, they alleged that the move has been made to finalise the policy keeping the provisions of open-pit mining and leasing out coal mines to multinational companies for limited royalty.

"Although the state of emergency is in force, there have been

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Russian warplanes pound Georgia

Moscow-US tensions worsen

AFP, Tbilisi

Dozens of Russian warplanes staged air raids in Georgia on Monday, officials said, but Prime Minister Vladimir Putin accused the United States of trying to undermine Russia's mounting military offensive.

Georgian forces shelled the South Ossetia capital, as European ministers went to Tbilisi and Moscow in a bid to end the worsening crisis, which Russia says has left 2,000 dead.

Russia and Georgia pursued their attacks as diplomatic tensions worsened. US President George W. Bush, Georgia's biggest western ally, said he had told Russia's influential prime minister that its bombing of Georgia was "unacceptable."

Putin responded by accusing the US of trying to disrupt the Russian military operation by

transporting Georgian troops from Iraq into the 'conflict zone.'

"I regret that some of our partners are not helping us but in fact are trying to impede us," Putin said directly referring to the US flights of Georgian troops.

"It seems that this will not change anything, but will move us away from resolving the situation," he added.

Bush said he had been "very firm" with Putin in their conversation.

"I expressed my grave concern about the disproportionate response of Russia and that we strongly condemn bombing outside of South Ossetia," the US president told NBC television.

Georgia's foreign ministry accused Russia of staging new air attacks.

"More than 50 Russian warplanes are flying over Georgia. Tbilisi was bombed. Bombs hit the village of Kojori and Makhata

mountain," said a ministry statement.

The Russian military acknowledged that it has lost 18 soldiers and four planes in the conflict but gave no details of its latest operations.

Georgia's President Mikheil Saakashvili told foreign reporters his country's army has killed several hundred Russian servicemen and shot down at least 80 Russian aircraft.

Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev said "a major part" of the military operation has been completed -- but the conflict escalated after Georgia launched an operation last week to take back control of breakaway South Ossetia.

Russian planes bombed radars at Tbilisi airport and hit civilian targets in the city of Gori, an interior ministry spokesman said.

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BDR to be strengthened, BOP increased

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to strengthen the capabilities of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), increase the number of border outposts (BOP) and build roads to enhance security in border areas.

Bangladesh is also considering a US offer of assistance to establish a border management system which would check smuggling of contraband substances and trespassing of criminals.

The prime concern of Bangladesh is to guard the 534km border, known as ungarded frontier, by establishing adequate number of BOPs and building roads along the border connecting the BOPs.

"A long stretch of our border, mainly the border in the remote hilly terrain of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) with India and Myanmar, desperately requires security mechanisms immediately," a senior home ministry official told The Daily Star.

The issues and the US offer were discussed during a meeting at the home ministry yesterday with Home Adviser MA Matin in the chair. Additional Director General of BDR, officials of the foreign ministry, National Board of Revenue (NBR), Bangladesh Navy and the intelligence agencies attended the meeting.

Home ministry officials said the meeting was convened to assess the overall border situation against

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PHOTO: STAR

Cheated workers who returned from Malaysia gather at Dhaka Reporters Unity office in the capital yesterday for a press conference to narrate the harassment by their employers.

45 cheated workers return from KL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Battered by employers and cheated by agents, 45 Bangladeshi workers returned from Malaysia yesterday after over one year with bruises all over their bodies.

The returnees who spent over Tk2 lakh each to get an overseas job allege Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur did not address their issue. As a result, they had to leave the "dreamland", which has now turned a "nightmare".

At a press conference organised by IMA Research Foundation at

Dhaka Reporters Unity, Shahadat Hossain said he went to Malaysia in a group of 40 through recruiting agency Mark Overseas in July last year and was employed in plastic company Classic Board Services Servicing Centre in Kelang at monthly RM700.

"We were told that we would work 12 hours, but we had to work 18 to 20 hours a day. In case of any single mistake, the Chinese boss would beat us up," he said.

He said the workers were given work target and if anyone failed to fulfil it, the boss used to hit them hard. Fifteen of the workers fled the

company in less than a month as they could no longer endure the torture.

"We told our agent Kamal of Vital Manpower in Malaysia that we could not tolerate the tortures anymore. After two months, he withdrew us and assured of arranging alternative jobs," Shahadat of Bikrampur said.

But Kamal took them to a hotel and disappeared, he added.

The group of 23 went to Bangladesh High Commission and received shelter for some days. A Malaysian NGO, Tenaganita, also

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PHOTO: STAR

A hospital and a government school are on this waterlogged street full of potholes in Banskhabari of Mohammadpur in the capital. Locals said the street has been in this state for long.

NO-TRUST PETITION Graft case against Koko shifted to another court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka yesterday transferred the graft case against Arifur Rahman Koko from the Special Judge Court-7 to Court-6 after Koko's lawyers submitted a petition for transfer of the case saying that they would not get justice from the trial court.

Advocate Sanaullah Miah, representing Koko in his absence, submitted the petition.

After the hearing, Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque called for the case file and later transferred the case to the Special Judge Court-6.

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Prayer Timing		
August 12		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-25	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-41	6-44
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Musharraf won't quit despite impeachment move

Parliament convenes

AFP, Islamabad

Embattled Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf will not resign, his spokesman said yesterday, as parliament convened to discuss the impeachment of the key US anti-terror ally.

The former general, who seized power in a bloodless military coup in 1999, faced further pressure when the biggest of Pakistan's provincial assemblies passed a no-confidence motion against him.

The ruling coalition said it was finalising charges against Musharraf after announcing last week that it would seek his impeachment, but the president's spokesman dismissed talk that he would quit to avoid the process.

"There is no reason that he should resign. Everything they are saying is false, so why should he resign?" presidential spokesman Rashid Qureshi told AFP.

The spokesman however declined to comment on Musharraf's plans. His options include trying to defeat impeachment in parliament, dissolving

parliament or declaring a state of emergency.

The coalition, which swept to power in general elections in February, needs a two-thirds majority in the upper and lower houses of parliament to impeach him. It would have to rely on independents to make up the numbers.

It would be the first time in Pakistan's history that a president has been impeached.

The national assembly, or lower house of parliament, met on Monday -- Musharraf's 65th birthday -- to discuss the impeachment issue but the charges against him would likely be filed later in the week, officials said.

"The work of the impeachment committee is almost complete. It is giving finishing touches to the charge sheet," said Farzana Raja, a senior member of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of slain former premier Benazir Bhutto.

"We gave him a chance to resign, we gave him a few months. But we have come to the conclusion that now the people of Pakistan, through their elected

representatives in the parliament, will have to do that," she told AFP.

The coalition is apparently trying to give Musharraf time to step down without facing the humiliation of impeachment -- as well as to prevent the coalition going through the uncertainty of a parliamentary vote.

But it is also seeking to crank up the pressure on him with non-binding no-confidence votes in the four provincial assemblies, the first of which was in powerful Punjab province on Monday.

"The resolution is adopted with a heavy majority and the mandate of the house," provincial assembly speaker Rana Mohammed Iqbal said after the vote in the eastern city of Lahore.

Punjab is also the stronghold of coalition leader Nawaz Sharif, a former premier who was ousted by Musharraf nine years ago.

The resolution said that Musharraf was "unfit to hold the office of the president by virtue of being guilty of violating the constitution of Pakistan and of gross misconduct."

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PHOTO: STAR

The judge who was sitting here escaped unhurt when the ceiling fan spinning above him crashed on his desk yesterday afternoon. Senior Judicial Magistrate of Chittagong Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun signed a verdict leaning forward and just reclined in his chair when the fan fell down smashing the glass sheet on his desk. The courtroom has a tin roof.

17 rescued from traffickers on Rajshahi border

RU CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) yesterday arrested two human traffickers and rescued 17 people including women and children on the Godagari border of Rajshahi.

Acting on a tip-off, the BDR 10 Battalion made the arrests and rescued the 17 including five women and nine children gathered at Rail Bazar Ghat in Godagari to be trafficked into India.

The rescued individuals, residents of the same area in Khulna, were identified as Ashok Mondol, 37, Ishak Ali Mondol, 34, Ershad Mondol, 32, Abeda Khatun, 55, Hafiza Begum, 24, Rozina Khatun, 25, Jharna Khatun, 25, Jahanara Begum, 55, Rupaiya, 14, Moyna, 10, Sharmin, 10, Tareque Sheikh, 8, Akash Ali, 2, Srabony, Suriya, 9, Labony, 3, and Ariful Islam, 2.

The two traffickers -- Mijarul Sheikh from India and Saddam Hossain from Chapainawabganj -- had brought the victims to Godagari from Rajshahi city promising to help them cross into India, said a BDR source.

The poverty-stricken victims said they were willing to go to India

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