

PUBLIC HEARING

Power price hike to have impact on economy

Say stakeholders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) yesterday held a public hearing on the proposed power price hike at the consumer level amid a lively debate between stakeholders.

The open hearing, headed by BERC Chairman Golam Rahman, discussed a proposal submitted by Dhaka Power Distribution Company (DPDC) to increase the power tariff on an average by 12.20 percent at the consumers' end.

BERC chairman and four members were in the judges' panel of the day-long hearing at the commission's office.

Stakeholders and representatives of different trade bodies

protested the proposal to increase tariff rates, saying it may have an adverse impact on the overall economy of the country.

Explaining the reason behind the price hike proposal, DPDC Managing Director (MD) Ataul Masud said the company has been paying additional Tk 15 crore every month for buying electricity from Power Development Board (PDB) since it has increased the rate by 14.28 percent per unit.

"DPDC has started its journey on July 1 2008 taking over the entire operation of the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (Desa) and at this newborn stage, it is a burden to cover the additional cost and so we proposed to

increase the tariff," he added.

The company has been running on the basis of its income. It has been paying PDB's electricity bill, paying charges to Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB), salaries of the officials and staffs and spending money for the maintenance system from its own income, he further said.

Ataul said, "We will have to face difficulties in paying PDB's bill, PGCB's charge and even government's debt service liability if the proposal is not approved."

In his submission, Shamsul Alam, a member of Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB), said it would not be logical to

increase the tariff now, adding that DPDC is a new company and it needs investment for its development.

But it would affect the consumers if DPDC collects the money for its development by increasing the tariff, he further said.

Answering queries of the stakeholders, the DPDC MD said they have targeted to decrease the system loss by 18 percent this year from last year's 22.8 percent.

The company has taken pre-paid meter system as a pilot project and other campaigning programmes to resist misuse of power, he said, adding that it will take immediate action against anyone found committing corruption.

Some changes in admin

Brig Gen (ret'd) Javed made ACC DG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday brought some changes to the administration, transferring seven officers with the rank of additional secretaries and 23 joint secretaries.

Besides, the government appointed Brig Gen (ret'd) M Javed Ali director general (DG) of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) for two years on contractual basis and Lutfur Raman assistant personal secretary (APS-1) to the president.

According to gazette notifications, DG of National Museum Samar Chandra Pal has been made acting secretary of the information ministry, chairman of Rural Electrification Board Nasiruddin Ahmed made acting secretary of housing and public works ministry and additional secretary of roads and highways division Shafiqul Alam made acting secretary to the President's Office.

Additional Secretary of food and disaster management ministry AKM Abdul Awal Majumder was sent to the agriculture ministry to replace officer in charge (OSD) Ahmed Hossain Khan, additional secretary of information ministry Ziaul Islam to the National Identity Registration Authority as chairman and additional secretary of Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury of local government division was transferred to the information ministry.

5TH AMENDMENT

Hearing on leave to appeals adjourned again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday again adjourned for four weeks the hearing on the leave to appeals against the High Court (HC) judgment that had declared illegal the 5th Amendment to the Constitution endorsing late president Ziaur Rahman's takeover and previous acts from August 15, 1975.

Upon a time prayer, moved by Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, the five-member full bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice MM Ruhul Amin passed the adjournment order.

The attorney general told the court that his office needs time regarding the proceedings of the leave to appeals against the HC verdict.

Earlier on February 11, the apex court adjourned for three weeks the hearing on the matter. The appeals came in the cause list of the Appellate Division for hearing yesterday.

On August 29, 2005, the HC upon a writ petition declared the 5th Amendment to the Constitution illegal, meaning the rules of Khandaker Mushtaque Ahmed, Abu Sadaat Mohammad Sayem and Maj Gen Ziaur Rahman from August 15, 1975 to April 9, 1979 were unlawful.

The Appellate Division on September 1, 2005 following a government prayer stayed the HC verdict.

The BNP-Jamaat coalition government and Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Kalyan Trust then filed two separate leave to appeals with this court against the HC verdict.

3 grenades, 180 bullets recovered from Ctg rifles training school

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Three grenades and 180 rounds of bullets were recovered from inside the Baitul Ijrat Rifles Training School (RTS) at Satkania in Chittagong yesterday.

A highly placed source said the abandoned bullets and explosives were recovered during the ongoing search in the area.

Of the recovered grenades, two were live and the other lay open, it added.

However, the source denied saying anything about whether the grenades were from the school magazine or brought in from outside.

Preparations are on to file a case against over 100 people, including acting commandant and assistant director of RTS, on charges of

their involvement in the BDR mutiny inside the school on February 26.

The source said the case will be filed with Satkania Police Station soon after the home ministry's approval is available.

As the RTS is at Satkania close to Bandarban army region, army is in charge of investigating the incidents at the centre and its military supervision.

Admission in DU clinical psychology

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Applications are invited for admission into MS course in clinical psychology at Dhaka University for the session 2009-10, says a press release.

Prospective candidates can collect the application form from departmental office, Room-5017, Arts Building (4th floor).

Last date for submission of application from is March 30. Written test will be held on April 6 and the viva voce on April 8.

BDR KILLINGS BNP mourning procession today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP will bring out a mourning procession across the country in memory of those were killed in the BDR mutiny last week.

Leaders, workers and supporters of BNP and its front and associate bodies have been asked to attend the procession which will be started in front of BNP central office at Naya Paltan in the city at around 3:00pm today.

The party asked its district and upazila leaders to take out procession in their respective areas, says a press release signed by Office Secretary Rizvi Ahmed.

Two militant suspects held in Gazipur

A CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Rab members arrested two militant suspects from Konabari in Gazipur yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as Osman Gani, 28, and Azizul Hakim, 30, residents of Baghmara upazila in Rajshahi. They passed Dakhil (SSC) from a local madrasa.

Rab sources said a Rab-1 team seized a diary from their possession where they had some important information.

Law enforcers were conducting drives in different areas in the district according to the information in the diary, they added.

The militant suspects lived as tenants of a house belongs to Abdul Kadir who was an imam of a local mosque at Enayetpur village in Gazipur Sadar.

The homeowner informed the law enforcers of the matter as he suspected the movement of the militants.

Of the two, Osman said he is an employee of a local private farm New Way, Maj Masud Parvez of Rab said, adding that they were being interrogated at Rab training camp at Shimultali in the town.

Meanwhile, a team of Rab-1 held another five militant suspects -- Salauddin, Hafiz Abu Yusuf, Saiful Islam alias Majul, Ali Hossain alias Manuiddin and Zakir Hossain - in Ambagh area at Konabari on Tuesday.

They hail from Barguna district, Rab said, adding that the suspects were handed over to Joydevpur Police Station.

Sub-Inspector Nazmul Islam Khan said the suspects would be shown arrested in a case no-80(2)09 and would be produced before a court in the district.



Seminar

Democracywatch organises a seminar marking the International Women Day. Venue: Democracywatch seminar room. Time: 2:30pm.

Workshop

D.Net organises a workshop on 'Achieving MDG goals: Development and promotion of handbook on technology for women'. Venue: IDB Bhaban meeting room. Time: 9:30am.

Poultry show

The inaugural ceremony of the international poultry show and seminar will be held. Venue: Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre. Time: 9:30am.

Painting exhibition

The inaugural ceremony of the painting exhibition by Liudmila Gurar will be held. Russian Centre of Science and Culture (RCSC), Dhaka will organise the event. Venue: RCSC. Time: 5:00pm.

Discussion

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad organises a discussion on masculinity in media. Venue: Mahila Parishad auditorium. Time: 3:00pm.



An army man stands guard as nurses and female staffs of BDR hospital enter the headquarters of the border guards at Pilkhana in the city yesterday.

5 rebels remanded, quizzed

FROM PAGE 1

With the identification of Lt Col Elahi, only two bodies of victims remain to be identified in DMCH morgue, which were recovered from a mass grave in Pilkhana.

Twelve family members of five missing army officials yesterday gave samples of their blood and saliva to the DNA testing lab of DMCH. DNA tests are being carried out to identify the two remaining unidentified bodies kept in the morgue.

"I hope we will be able to complete the tests in seven days," chief of the lab, Sharif Akhteruzzaman, told reporters yesterday.

Till filing of this report late last night, 74 bodies of victims were recovered including of 55 army officers who had been in the service at the time of their slaying.

The two investigation committees, formed by the government and the army, visited BDR Pilkhana Headquarters yesterday.

CID investigators collected some more evidence from the crime scenes all day long, but none in the probe committees and investigation teams disclosed anything to the media about the findings.

Fire Service and Civil Defence personnel also continued their search for missing army officers in Pilkhana sewers.

REMAND OF FIVE MUTINY SUSPECTS
Our court correspondent reported that five suspects

including Towhidul Alam, arrested by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) the day before, were produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) court yesterday afternoon in bullet-proof vests and helmets with their hands cuffed behind their backs.

Metropolitan Magistrate Abdur Rahim sent them to a ten-day remand.

No lawyer appeared for the defendants during the hearing of the remand prayer by CID.

During the hearing, Nayek Firoj told reporters that he was not arrested, rather he surrendered, while Habibul Azad Ali said he was arrested from Rangpur on February 27.

Of the five arrested suspects, DADs Towhid and Rahim are mentioned as principal accused in the case.

FUGITIVES

BDR personnel who did not report back to their stations within the stipulated time announced by the government, will be considered fugitives and will not be allowed to enter the BDR headquarters until they are proven innocent.

As the Operation Rebel Hunt goes on across the country many BDR personnel, who had not returned to their stations within the deadline, began thronging police stations and the BDR headquarters out of fear yesterday.

"I will not allow those to enter the headquarters, who did not return within the deadline. Our job does not tolerate violation of discipline," BDR Director General Brig Gen Md Mainul

Islam told The Daily Star.

"In my view they are fugitives, as they violated the code of conduct of their profession. Now they may either surrender to police stations, or get caught in the Operation Rebel Hunt. They will be allowed to enter the headquarters once they are proven innocent," Mainul added.

The BDR DG yesterday also issued a notice for all sector commanders and acting sector commanders to attend a combined meeting at 9:00am on March 8 in Shena Kunjo of Dhaka Cantonment.

He, however, could not confirm how many of the deserters are still out, as many of them returned to respective units across the country.

The 6,124 returnee BDR personnel so far allowed to enter the BDR compound are tasked with jobs of sweeping the compound except the crimescenes.

Meanwhile, uncertainty looms large over family members of BDR personnel, who accompanied the returnee deserters to Dhaka from different parts of the country. They are waiting outside the headquarters to know the current status of their family members inside Pilkhana compound.

Besides, about 100 BDR personnel who had been on different types of leave, before the mutiny started, thronged the headquarters yesterday to join back.

Sources said, they were kept waiting outside the headquarters till filing of this report.

10 HC judges to get back job

FROM PAGE 16

All the appointments of the judges to the Appellate and High Court Divisions of the SC will be completed very soon, he added.

On the other hand, one of the 10 judges has decided not to join the office without giving him seniority, sources said.

The Appellate Division on March 2 upheld the HC verdict asking the government to reappoint these 10 HC judges. The apex court, however, did not allow the government to give them seniority though the HC in its verdict directed to that

end.

They were appointed as additional HC judges for two years at the fag-end of the previous Awami League government.

Some SC lawyers has expressed their apprehension over the reappointment as it may create an ego problem between the 10 judges and 29 litigant judges, since the 10 judges are senior to many of the sitting judges in terms of age and law practice.

Meanwhile, three of the 10 judges yesterday ruled out any kind of ego problem with the

sitting judges though they will be considered junior to the sitting judges.

They said all the judges are their friends and they will maintain amicable relationships each other after the reappointment.

While asked about the relationship between the confirmed and unconfirmed judges, former judge of the HC Justice Syed Amirul Islam said the 10 judges will be considered as junior to the sitting judges of the HC and if any one feels any ego problem, he will refrain from joining the office as there is no legal dispute in this regard.

23 eminent citizens shocked

FROM PAGE 16

They said the decision to declare amnesty was correct as it helped to calm the tense situation and prevented further bloodshed. It also helped to bring the situation to a quick resolution.

The statement further said that the firm and cautious speech by the prime minister played a successful role in reducing the tension and helped surrendering the arms of the mutineers.

Confusion was created over the death figures and such an enormous error increased tension, they said.

They said proceedings of the enquiry committee headed by Anisuzzaman Khan should be transparent and be made public. They also expressed the hope that the committee will look all aspects of the issue.

The citizens think the blame-game of the political parties is not healthy for investigation and urged the political parties to refrain from delivering such speeches until completion of the investigation.

Now it has become essential to be focused on unveiling the truth and ensure justice

through impartial investigation, they said.

The signatories to the statement are Shirin Haque, Kamal Lohani, Rehnuna Ahmed, Prof Anu Mohammad, Dr Shahid Malik, Khushi Kabir, Dr Zafarullah Chowdhury, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Prof Ferdous Azim, Prof Parveen Hasan, Dr Lamia Karim, Dr Shahidul Alam, Zakir Hossain, Mohiuddin Ahmed, Nasim Ahmed, Rawshan Ara, Dr Rebeka Milton, Mahin Sultan, Rina Roy, Kamrun Nahar, Golam Mostofa, Farida Yasmin and Samia Afrin.

Petrobangla's U-turn

FROM PAGE 16

Interest to find its strategic partner because the ministry said it should be done after the government approved the draft coal policy.

The four-year-old draft is gathering dust due to political indecisions. However, other file work has meanwhile been completed.

On December 21 last year, the Bureau of Minerals Development (BMD) approved the Dighipara coal zone licence for Petrobangla and as per the licence, Petrobangla paid the government the annual fee for 2008 upon marking the licensed area.

Now instead of finding a strategic partner through an open tender, Petrobangla says, "It is the right time to conduct the Techno-Economic Feasibility Study." Petrobangla does not have the efficient manpower, technical strength for this study, it said in its February 24 letter.

The letter added the non-approval of the coal policy did not appear to hinder such a

study as it would be carried out as per the terms and conditions of the BMD licence.

Petrobangla adds that the Polish government was still open for the tied aid credit and praised Poland as one of the top 10 countries of the world in coal production that had 400 years of experience.

In the early nineties, tied aid credits like supplier's credits in Maddyapara and Barapukuria gave scopes of corruption. Both the Maddyapara hard rock and Barapukuria coal mines have suffered many years of implementation delay and poor project designs.

Both of the companies failed to achieve the actual goal, inflicting heavy losses on the government. But at the same time, the local agents of the companies and the companies that developed these mines made profits.

The strategic partner is supposed to provide finances and technical expertise in exploring and later developing the coal deposit with Petrobangla.

The Geological Survey of

Bangladesh (GSB) discovered high quality bituminous coal in Dighipara in Nababganj upazila of Dinajpur during its 1995-2004 exploration.

Through drilling only five boreholes in 1.25 sq km areas, GSB found coal in five layers having a thickness of 62 metres at depths ranging 323 metres to 408 metres.

It is primarily estimated to have a deposit of 100 million tonnes.

However, the deposit has the prospect of being spread in a five square-kilometre areas having 500 million tonnes of coal.

To confirm this prospect, Petrobangla would have to undertake detailed work programmes.

Petrobangla was given the licence when a number of international companies were seeking the same for Dighipara exploration and development.

Bangladesh will need 13 million tonnes of coal every year for the next 10 years to generate additional power to meet its rising demand, as the natural gas supplies to generate power will not be able to cater this need.

Mother, son strangled in N'ganj

A CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A mother and her minor son were strangled by some unidentified criminals at Fatullah in Narayanganj Sadar on Tuesday.

The ill-fated were identified as Rezia Khatun, 28, wife of truck helper Alamgir, and her son Ishak, 9, a student of class three.

Fatullah police recovered the bodies lying on the bed from the house at Dharmaganj Dhalibari last night.

Police said throats of the bodies were tied with a cloth.

Local people said Billal, a friend of Ishak, found the bodies at the house on Tuesday evening and screamed out in horror.

They rushed to the spot and informed the police of the matter, adding that the criminals also looted valuables from the house.



Qulkhwani of Maj Shahnewaz today

METRO DESK

Qulkhwani of Maj Hossain Sohel Shahnewaz (Piko) will be held today, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at the mosque opposite Shikha Onirbar at Dhaka Cantonment after Asr prayers.

Maj Shahnewaz was killed during the mutiny at the BDR Headquarters on February 25.

He left behind his mother, wife, a daughter and son, and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to attend the doa mahfil.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK



Today is the second death anniversary of Suraiya Chowdhury, wife of a former

police official Shahadat Hossain Chowdhury, says a press release.

On the occasion, a Qurankhwani will be held today and a doa mahfil at her residence tomorrow.

Relatives, friends and admirers are requested to attend the programmes and pray for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Development

FROM PAGE 16

said, "Such a big fair only 7-8 days after the incidents (BDR mutiny) proves that people of the country will go forward in any situation as we are a nation of brave people."

Such a big international event and huge participation of foreign nationals prove that those countries also have much confidence in the present government, he said.

The fair styled 'BACI International Construction Industry Exhibition' is being participated by 23 local construction firms and one from India, and held at Hotel Sheraton.

Bangladesh Association of Construction Industry (BACI) organised the show on the sidelines of the 37th Convention of International Federation of Asian and Western Pacific Contractors' Association (IFAWPCA) in Dhaka today.

The three-day convention, hosted by BACI, a member of IFAWPCA, will be attended by 270 construction experts and entrepreneurs including 220 foreign delegates.

IFAWPCA has members from 16 countries in the region.

Speaking at the inaugural function of the fair, Rafiqul Islam, President of BACI, said construction industry in the country accounts for 27 percent of GDP and employs a few million people.

Aminul Islam, president of IFAWPCA, also spoke.

At the fair, participants are exhibiting construction materials including road, brick, hollow blocks, tiles, pipes, construction machineries and chemicals and cement.

WEATHER TODAY

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in next 12 hours till 6:00pm today.

Having chances of rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind at one or two places over Sylhet division, Met Office said predicting nearly unchanged day temperature over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:03pm today and rises at 6:16am tomorrow.

Highest temperature 33.4 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rangamati and Patuakhali and lowest 14.2 degrees Celsius at Rajshahi.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	31.7	19.4	55	39
Chittagong	28.8	21.0	82	84
Rajshahi	31.8	14.2	70	46
Khulna	32.5	20.2	93	61
Barisal	32.7	23.7	91	58
Sylhet	31.5	20.1	66	43
Cox's Bazar	31.0	21.0	75	79