

Power crisis created to serve certain sections

Speakers tell press conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government must ensure adequate gas supply to its own power plants, instead of feeding rental and captive plants to overcome ongoing power crisis, said the speakers at a press conference yesterday.

The press conference on consumers' ongoing power sufferings was organised by the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) in the city.

The government is putting off production at Power Development Board (PDB) plants one after another on the plea of gas shortfall, said Prof M Shamsul Alam of Chittagong Engineering University in his keynote presentation.

But on the other hand Petrobangla is making commitments for uninterrupted gas supply to small, rental and captive plants in the private sector, said Alam, a professor of Electrical and Electronic Engineering.

"Power crisis is artificially created to serve certain business sections," he said, adding that the 450-megawatt electricity generated by small and rental plants is at the cost of putting off production of the same amount at PDB plants.

He said general consumers have to pay more for per unit of electricity from private companies than that paid to public companies.

In one of the 14-point charter of demands, CAB demanded that the government should compel the owners of captive power plants to consume their own power to save 600 megawatt electricity in the national grid and ease up unbearable load-shedding.

Alam said 50 percent of total gas consumed for power generation in the country at present is procured from foreign companies at a high price.

The government must attain power sufficiency with its own resource lessening dependence on foreign fund, he added.

He said the country requires 4700 to 5500 megawatt electricity every day.

CAB Senior Programme Officer Endad Hossain Malek said the government must take immediate steps to stop unnecessary illumination, close shopping malls and markets by 8:00pm and popularise solar panel.

CAB President Borhan Ahmed and General Secretary Quazi Faruque were present at the press conference.

Hijacking of car Police to probe role of Nanak's private secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Shahidul Haque yesterday said the police will investigate whether Matir Rahman, private secretary (PS) to State Minister for LGRD Jahangir Karbir Nanak, has a role in the hijacking of a government car he used.

The car, which was hijacked on April 11, was recovered from Chengur village in Jessor on April 17.

The DMP Commissioner made the remark in reply to a question at a press briefing held at the office of the Detective Branch (DB) of Police in Dhaka.

A gang of miscreants hijacked the car at Uttara in the capital firing shots at driver Faruque Hossain.

Shahidul Haque said the DB police recovered the car and also arrested Anwar and Masum. Earlier, one Sirajul was also arrested in this connection.

In another drive on April 14, the detective police recovered the motorbike used in killing the cook of Dhamachi Travel Agency in Banani and arrested two suspected killers, he said.

The arrestees, Arif alias Debashis, son of a high official of Bangladesh Bank, and Roman, who are now on remand, admitted that they along with five other criminals made the gun attack on April 9, killing cook Nazrul Islam and injuring messenger Zahirul Islam, said the police official.

The two also admitted that they are members of local Sahadat gang and mentioned the names of five other killers, but the police did not disclose the names for the sake of investigation.

The DMP commissioner also said the police have stepped up patrols and set up check-posts in crime-prone areas in the city in a bid to curb crimes.

Shahidul Haque said they will make a new list of top criminals as it is a regular duty of the police.

He, however, said the police are not aware of the return of top criminals who fled abroad during the tenure of the caretaker government.

Police alone will not be able to curb crimes in the city as various factors are behind the crimes, he said and underscored the need for community policing system to combat crimes.

PHOTO: STAR



Masterda Surya Sen Parishad places a wreath at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday on the occasion of the 79th anniversary of Chittagong Armoury Raid during the anti-British movement.

Minister seeks Chinese help in five priority projects

UNB, Dhaka

Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain yesterday met with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao at Boao in China and handed him a letter from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on matters of common interest of the two countries.

During the meeting at Sofitel Hotel, the minister sought cooperation from the Chinese government in implementing five priority projects of the new Hasina government in the communications sector, including construction of a railway from Chittagong to Gundum on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border via Cox's Bazar.

The other projects are on construction of a second Padma Bridge or Tunnel at Paturia-Doulatpur point, construction of a tunnel under the river Karnaphuli, bridge on the river Arial Khan at Kajirte site and tunnel from Bir Shrestha Shaheed Jahangir Gate to Agargaon Rokeya Sarani in the city.

Describing the importance of the projects in the infrastructure sector of Bangladesh, Syed Abul Hossain said if implemented, these projects would not only help develop the country's economy but also "consolidate the friendly relations between the two countries".

The Chinese prime minister assured all possible help in materialising the new government's plan to build a digital Bangladesh and its Vision 2021. He expressed gratitude and thanks to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for

inquiring about his welfare and inviting him to visit Bangladesh.

Earlier on Friday, Abul Hossain attended a dinner hosted by Saudi Prince and Chairman of Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SBIC) Saud Bin Abdullah Bin Thayen Al Saud at the venue and urged Saudi Arabia to invest in the petrochemical sector of Bangladesh.

He went to China to attend the three-day Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2009 that began on April 17.

BBC SANGLAP

Call to probe causes of deaths of BDR jawans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at the BBC Bangladesh Sanglap yesterday called for an investigation into the recent deaths of BDR jawans inside the BDR headquarters and BDR sector lines in other districts, saying that such deaths are not normal.

The people have a general impression that the deaths are not caused by heart attack, nor did they commit suicide. The causes of deaths of BDR jawans should be investigated and for that the government should form a special committee," said BNP standing committee member Moudud Ahmed, who was a panelist at the Sanglap.

Members of the audience also demanded that the autopsy reports of the BDR jawans be made public.

Dr Alauddin Ahmed, adviser to the prime minister, who was present as a panelist, said that if any family member of the BDR jawans files any complaint or case, the government would look into the matter.

The statement of the BDR Director General in this regard is the official version," he added.

Prof Sadeka Halim said such deaths are really a matter of concern. "I hope the government would look into it," she said.

The speakers also urged the government to give priority to the power sector and take immediate steps to resolve the power crisis.

They also called on the government to take steps to offset the impacts of global economic recession on the readymade garment sector and other export-oriented

About power crisis issue, Moudud Ahmed said the government would focus more on management of electricity than on power generation because it will take much time to generate power.

Dr Alauddin said the government will take necessary steps to address the power crisis and economic recession issue.

About the cancellation of lease of Khaleda Zia's Cantonment residence, Moudud said his party is ready to launch a legal battle against the government decision.

The lease was cancelled out of political vengeance, he said.

Several members of the audience urged the government to settle the issue in the court.

Conversion of GPA into division demanded

DU CORRESPONDENT

A group of Dhaka University students, who passed their SSC examinations in 2001, 2002 and 2003 and completed HSC exams in 2003, formed a human chain on the campus yesterday demanding an education ministry circular to convert grade point average (GPA) of SSC and HSC levels into first division, second division and third division.

They demanded the ministry convert GPA from 3.50 to above out of five as first division, GPA from 2.50 to 3.49 as second division and GPA from 2.49 to its below as third division.

The students alleged that they are now facing discrimination in job market as differ-

ent corporate houses are issuing their recruitment circulars as per their will, saying that as they were in the earlier batches when the GPA system was introduced in SSC and HSC levels and marks of optional courses were not added to the total GPA.

They further said that they have achieved lower GPA than the students are achieving now. Only 20 students from science group got GPA 5 in HSC exams in 2003, while no students from humanities and business studies achieved GPA 5. But in 2008, a total of 19,108 students achieved GPA 5 in HSC level.

They said only a circular from education ministry can put an end to this discrimination.



PHOTO: PID
Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad exchanges views with journalists during a visit to the Prothom Alo office in the city yesterday.

Azad seeks constructive criticism from media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad yesterday sought assistance, honest advice and constructive criticism from the media.

He told journalists, "Assist the government for the sake of the country by exercising professionalism and the government would also consider the problems of the media."

He said this while exchanging views with the journalists at the Prothom Alo at its office at Karwan Bazar in the city.

Seeking some time to resolve the problems of the country, including power crisis, he said agriculture and power sector would be given highest priority in the next budget.

Azad also said that the government passed the Right to Information (RTI) Act soon after assuming power to ensure people's right to information, adding that irregularities of the act would also be corrected.

He said the government found lack of budget while implementing different development programmes. So, it has to wait until the next budget to carry out the development projects.

The bureaucracy is not working up to the pace the government wants to carry out its activities," he said while talking about the bureaucratic bottleneck.

Matir Rahman, editor of the Prothom Alo, said the policy of his newspaper is to say good to good things and goodbye to bad things, adding that this trend would continue in future.

Later, he also visited private radio station Radio ABC.

Producers' ultimatum to Channel 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Television Programme Producers' Association of Bangladesh yesterday gave an ultimatum to the Channel 1 authorities to pay their dues within 12:00 noon today.

Uncertainty over the payment has forced the association to take such action against Channel 1, Mamunur Rashid, president of Television Programme Producers' Association of Bangladesh told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said if the channel authorities would not pay our dues by 12:00 noon they would boycott Channel 1 and stop supplying programmes from tomorrow (April 20).

He said they would also go for legal action against the channel if they (authorities) fail to provide them with any documents, including bank checks or bank guarantee to clear up dues.

Channel 1 owes Tk 1.27 crore to programme producers from the very beginning of broadcasting that started on January 24, 2006, he added.

Prior to announcing the ultimatum, the association leaders held a meeting with the channel authorities that ended without any decision.

Mamunur Rashid said the association decided to give the ultimatum as the channel authorities refused to pay their bills in cash or cheques.

He said the authorities have pledged several times to clear up dues and requested them to keep supplying programmes for the last four years but never fulfilled the promises.

He said the producers are facing financial crisis as some TV channels are not paying their dues totalling about Tk 5 crore over the years.

When contacted, Prof Mazedul Islam, managing director of Channel 1, said they have a mutual understanding over the issue. Besides, the Channel 1 has no rules to issue advance cheques for programmes, he added.

He also said they had settled the issue at a meeting with the producers' association yesterday. Payment would be given through Prime Bank, he added.

Call to make people aware of rescheduled weather signals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a workshop yesterday stressed the need for creating awareness among the people, especially those living in the coastal areas, about the rescheduled cautionary signals by the meteorological office which will come into effect from April 30.

Before putting the rescheduled signal into action, the government should take necessary steps to create awareness among the concerned people about the signals to be adapted properly, they added.

Disaster Management Bureau (DMB) and Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) organised the daylong workshop on 'Disaster risk reduction and media' at Biam auditorium in the city.

They blamed different dishonest recruiting agencies for the present sorry situation of Bangladeshi workers in that country.

They also expressed concern at the death of Bangladeshi workers abroad and urged the

DR Maksud Kamal, national expert of CDMP, apprehended that around 60 percent non-engineering buildings of Dhaka city could be badly damaged due to moderate earthquake.

He also stressed the need for creating awareness among the people about the non-structural vulnerability of earthquake to save them live during slight to moderate earthquake.

With DMB Director Dildar Ahmed in the chair, the workshop also attended by around 50 journalists.

Amend UZ act to resolve crisis

Says 11-party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 11-party, a partner of the ruling Awami League-led grand alliance, yesterday said that giving authority to lawmakers in upazila parishad in the Upazila Parishad Act 2009 goes against the spirit of the independent local government system and such a provision is inconsistent with the people."

"It is not possible to stop recurrence of natural calamity, but we can reduce its vulnerability by developing some comprehensive strategies," he said, adding: "The concerned authorities would have to concentrate on how to lessen the risk of disaster."

The district administration formed an investigation committee in this regard but failed to stop gambling at the fair as gambling was organised violating the condition of the government decision.

The leaders of the party also expressed concern as what it said 'the government and the upazila chairmen are at loggerheads' over the power in upazila parishad and suggested resolving the problem with patience bringing necessary amendments to the act. They also termed the remarks of a minister regarding upazila parishad 'irresponsible'.

They said these at a meeting held at Gontantri Party office

in the city, which was attended, among others, by Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon MP, General Secretary Bimal Biswas, Haji Abdus Samad and Afzal Hossain of Gontantri Party.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashraful Islam on Thursday said if parliament deems that upazila parishads are not functioning properly, it can abolish the tier of local government. And a one-line bill will suffice to do so.

His comments came a day after upazila chairmen and vice-chairmen threatened to declare the lawmakers persona non grata in their constituencies.

The newly elected local government representatives have been calling for cancellation of the Upazila Parishad Act 2009 as it curtails their authority and requires them to accept the local MPs' advice.

