

Power crisis

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She said her government will fix minimum wage for labourers in line with the market price.

The premier said the present government has already formed a tripartite committee comprised of workers, owners and government representatives to ensure the rights of labourers.

Thousands of activists and leaders of the AL and its associated organisations attended the rally, the first public meeting of Hasina since she assumed the office of prime minister on January 6.

The premier sat behind a bullet-proof glass on the dais and also delivered speech from a podium walled with bullet-proof glass amid tight security.

Several central party leaders were not even allowed to go near the dais.

Processions from Dhaka and its adjoining areas marched to the Paltan Maidan shortly after 12:00 noon. Thousands of party activists and leaders carrying banners, placard and festoons reached the venue on foot as vehicular movement on all roads around Paltan Maidan was restricted.

But there was no traffic congestion on the streets in and around the area on the day as it was a public holiday.

As the Paltan Maidan got jam-packed, many had to listen to the premier's speech standing at Zero Point, Muktangan, Bangabandhu Avenue, Dainik Bangla and Rajuk Bhavan.

Referring to militancy,

50 injured

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Hasina said investigations show that ministers and lawmakers of the previous BNP-led alliance government patronised militants and damaged the country's image abroad.

Commenting on the seizure of 10 truckloads of firearms and ammunition, Hasina said the involvement of former BNP ministers and lawmakers in it is coming out gradually.

The premier said some undesirable incidents occurred in the four-month rule of the present government which settled those successfully one after another.

Crisscrossing some opposition leaders for their remarks about the massacre at the BDR headquarters, she said 57 officers were killed in the incident but their (BNP) statements indicated that they would be happy if more lives were lost and a civil war had broken out in the country.

"You have to remain alert as conspiracies are still going on," Hasina said.

She sought people's cooperation to foil all conspiracies and build the 'golden Bangladesh' dreamt by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"These days of sufferings will not last longer. We shall bring happiness to people's lives," she said.

Sramik League President Abdul Matin Master presided over the rally attended by, among others, Abdul Jalil, Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta and engineer Mosharraf Hossain.

Coarse rice

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other varieties of rice in the city markets during the period.

Within last two days, the price of polao rice went up by Tk 13-15 per kg in the city's markets.

In the city's retail markets, per kg coarse rice was sold at Tk 21-23 yesterday compared to Tk 19-21 last week while Tk 18.50-21.50 per kg in the wholesale market compared to Tk 15-18 a week back.

In Mohammadpur Krishi Market (wholesale rice market) Ekota Rice Agency manager Masud Rana said "The prices of old rice and newly harvested rice have gone up in the markets in rural areas. The polao rice that they sold for Tk 50 per kg two days back had to be sold for Tk 64 yesterday as its supply from Chapainawabganj came down drastically within last four days."

Nizamuddin, general secretary of Dhaka's biggest rice wholesale market Babubazar and Badamtali, said when the government wanted market price of rice to fall it happened so but now the price is going up as the government wants so.

He said, since the government has fixed the rate at Tk 22 per kg, the sellers also have hiked the price of new rice, which is arriving in the market but it would not be clear before about one week what the trend of rice price will be as the price in Dhaka will depend on supply.

Nizamuddin said the price of paddy increased by Tk 70-100 per maund (37.32 kg) in the rural markets over the last five days.

New paddy has started arriving in different musafal (rural) markets. Those whose paddy are still in the croplands

64 civilians

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Sri Lanka's defence ministry on Saturday rejected satellite imagery issued by the United Nations in support of allegations that security forces shelled a civilian area last month.

The defence ministry said the allegations, based on UN aerial images posted on the UNOSAT website and used on several foreign television channels, had "no scientific validity" unless there was evidence on the ground.

Khaleda said the ruling party confused the people by making false pledges before the election and now they want to impose their failure on to the opposition's shoulder. "The government is firing employees instead of giving jobs to at least one person of each family of the country," she said.

"Someone wanted to banish me from the country and now someone wants to oust me from my house. You all know about the torture on my family members and myself but in any situation we will be beside the people," she said.

Khaleda also criticised the PM for her role regarding the BDR incident. She said time was extended for submitting investigation report only to protect the real conspirators.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Standing Committee member Moudud Ahmed and Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, city Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka and party leaders Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Hannan Shah, MK Anwar, Abdullah Al Noman, Mirza Abbas, Goyeshwar Chandra Roy and Selima Rahman, among others, addressed the rally with Sramik Dal President Nazrul Islam Khan in the chair.

Upazila

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said, "We want a proper direction of work, equal involvement in development activities and equal allocation of funds to be able to execute them."

Others pointed out that the local UNO and MPs still have the last word on any development work in their areas.

During the upazila election in January this year, 1936 women candidates contested 480 seats across the country. A total of 475 women were elected.

Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) at Fatulla Model Police Station Mir Abu Taib said police fired 11 blank shots to bring the situation under control.

Contingents of police have been deployed in the area as a tense situation prevailed there, he said.

On information, Fatulla thana police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control of the police and damaging shops would be brought to justice.

She urged all the elected women to create their own forum, and to work as a pressure group in the parliamentary standing committees to ensure implementation of women's rights.

Ayesha also noted that the government's recent decision to appoint local lawmakers as advisers to the upazila parishad would act as a barrier to the democratic running of the local government.

"Politicalisation is going on across the country... Even government employees cannot perform their duties properly... Universities and medical colleges have closed one after another, teachers assaulted. Is this the 'digital Bangladesh'?"

Muggers

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him by shooting.

Krishna was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he was undergoing treatment, police said.

Family sources at DMCH said the snatchers shot two bullets in his back as Krishna tried to resist.

Sub-Inspector Goutam Roy of Sutrapur Police Station told The Daily Star that internal conflicts among the business men in the area might have caused the incident.

Obama

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because of his ties to Islamists, the US government has long held Sharif at arm's length.

But now some Obama administration officials say those ties could be useful in helping Zardari's government to confront the challenge from Taliban insurgents, the report said.

The Pakistani government ceded control of the nearby Swat valley to Islamists in February, signing a deal to allow religious hardliners to enforce Islamic law in the region in order to end a bloody two-year rebellion led by a radical cleric.

But instead of disarming as required under the deal, the Taliban instead pushed further south towards Islamabad, taking over large swathes of Lower Dir and Buner.

According to the paper, the US move reflects heightened concern in the Obama administration about the survivability of the Zardari government.

The head of the United States Central Command, General David Petraeus, has said in private meetings in Washington that the Pakistani government is increasingly vulnerable, The Times said.

Amending the act in 2004, the government empowered the ACC to withdraw cases it files. Before the amendment, the government held the authority to withdraw those cases.

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No one in the administration is trying to broker an actual power-sharing agreement between Zardari and Sharif, the paper noted.

But administration officials say Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Richard Holbrooke, the special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, have both urged Zardari and Sharif to look for ways to work together, The Times said.

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