

China delays plan on 'Internet filter'

AFP, Beijing

China has delayed a plan requiring that all new computers come with a Chinese-made Internet filtering software programme, state media reported yesterday, hours before it was to take effect.

China had planned to implement the controversial rule beginning Wednesday but it has been postponed, the official Xinhua news agency said, citing the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

"The pre-installation was delayed as some computer producers said such a massive installation demanded extra time," Xinhua said, quoting an unnamed ministry spokesman.

The spokesman did not give a new timetable for the software to be installed.

"The ministry would also keep on soliciting opinions to perfect the pre-installation plan," he was quoted saying.

The move is likely to be hailed by foreign and domestic critics who have accused the government of trying to increase already tight controls over the Internet.

These claims were rejected by the spokesman, Xinhua said, quoting him as saying assertions in some foreign media that the software was an intrusion of privacy were "groundless" and "irresponsible".

Computer makers had been told that from July 1, they must either pre-install the Green Dam Youth Escort software or include it on a disc accompanying all new personal computers sold in the country.

The United States and European Union, industry groups, Internet freedom advocates and even some Chinese state media reports had criticised the plan as a new threat to Internet freedom in China, which has the world's largest online population at roughly 300 million.

Beijing has consistently countered that the filter is designed to shelter youngsters from pornography and violence, and give parents control over what their children

9 HC judges

FROM PAGE 16

June 23 appointed the nine additional judges for two years as per Article 98 of the Constitution of Bangladesh. Now the HC has a total of 82 judges.

Petrobangla

FROM PAGE 1

allowing a private company to work in GTCL's system, Chevron is expected to sign a partnership contract with the GTCL sources said.

"The compression project will be implemented within the terms and conditions of the PSC. Upon completion of the work and cost-recovery, the compressor will be handed over to the custody and jurisdiction of GTCL," a Chevron official said, on condition of anonymity.

"All operative gas fields in the north-eastern parts of the country could produce more gas. However, pressure constraints in the north-east to south-west gas pipeline prevent that from being possible without additional compression."

"Adding compression to key parts of the system will help alleviate and circumvent that constraint," the official explained.

He pointed out that the compressor station would serve to increase gas transmission capacity with respect to both throughput and pressure of the existing 24" north-south and 30" Muchai-Ashuganj gas transmission pipeline.

Chevron's compressor station project cost is US\$ 12 million higher than the cost proposed by Korean company Hyundai in the cancelled GTCL tender.

Some officials say that the country's law and the PSC do not allow Chevron to operate within the GTCL system. But on June 11, Petrobangla Chairman in a letter to the ministry seeking permission on this deal said that Article 15 of the PSC accommodates Chevron's installation of

Labour leaders

FROM PAGE 1

control workers using local politicians and jhute businessmen instead of listening to their demands," said Mir Abul Kalam Azad, general secretary of Swadhin Bangla Garments Sramik Karmachari Federation.

"Without any logical ground owners do not like trade union which might have mitigated the unrest in the sector substantially," he added.

"Owners want to suppress the movement themselves thus causing unrest among workers as they never return with their demands unmet as was the case this time," he said.

This movement cannot be called labour movement. This movement was waged against a totally different perspective. This movement is totally different and distinctive from the earlier one," said Sirazul Islam Rony, coordinator of Bangladesh Garments Worker Unity Council.

According to the leaders the unrest erupted in the S Suhu Sweater Factory on Saturday after a jhute businessman, also a Bangladesh Chhatra League activist, in the area tried to control workers of the factory on behalf of the owner.

"Incident of unrest are taking place in sweater factories in large number as wages of the labours vary from one production to another in a sweater factory. And somehow workers are being repressed somewhere," said Rokeya Sultana Anju, president of Jatiya Garments Sramik Jote.

The leaders suggested the government should immediately announce that it will bring the killers of workers to book, investigate the killings, give compensation to the affected families and take initiatives to solve their problem.

They also emphasised the need for introducing the provision of trade union in the labour law, hikes workers' wage and ensuring cooperation from both the government and opposition in resolving the crisis.

"Workers need a place to express their demands and it is also a necessity for the owners to take decisions after consulting with workers. Neither the government nor the owners addressed the matter with proper attention," he said.

The factory has had full orders even at this time of recession and the annual turnover of the unit is \$7 million.

Sanjeev said they would pay their workers on July 9.

Meanwhile, the situation has returned to normal in the area.

Ismail Hossain, managing director of nearby Sharmin Group, said they resumed production yesterday. He said he had asked their workers to stop production when outsiders set fire on Ha-Meem Sweater factory.

Thousands

FROM PAGE 1

Ha-Meem Group management said they will have to shed jobs from their sweater factories due to a shortage of machines, accommodation problems and dwindling supply of raw materials.

AK Azad, managing director of the group, told The Daily Star, "All three of our sweater factory buildings have gone up in smoke."

He said preliminary estimates suggests their losses would go beyond Tk 100 crore mark.

Director (administration) Brig Gen (retd) Mohammad Ali Mandal said, "We are now trying to resume production in two adjacent buildings with the salvaged machines and raw materials. There, we may employ around 2,000 workers."

He however said it won't be possible to retain the rest 2,000 workers as they are not able to work in woven garment factories that emerged unscathed from the arson.

Queried how they will go about job-shedding, Ha-Meem's MD said, "The workers would be relieved of their jobs through motivation so they understand the situation and do not get angry."

According to the rules, all their dues will be paid within July 10, he added.

Officer-in-Charge of Ashulia Police Station Monwar Hossain told The Daily Star that they had filed a case against 3,000 people, mostly unnamed, for the arson attack on Ha-Meem Group and other factories.

No arrest was made as of filing the report at 9:00pm.

The OC said over 2,000 additional police forces were deployed in the area on Monday night. Now that the situation has improved, most of them have been withdrawn.

Some 50 policemen were sent in front of the Ha-Meem Group complex to ensure security.

Ha-Meem Group MD has alleged that his factories could have been saved, had the police swung to action and additional forces been sent in.

Jalalabad field is playing a pivotal role in supporting Petrobangla meet the current energy need of the country. The purpose of the seismic survey is to ascertain whether the field has additional production capacity.

Aila-hit farmers

FROM PAGE 16

repairs some extensively damaged embankments may not be possible in time, he added.

A number of government and NGO officials also fear a large part of the damaged embankments may not be repaired.

"Around a quarter kilometre embankment by the Rammabandha river in Kalapara merged into the river. I don't think this could be repaired shortly," said Niruttam Kumar Sarker, upazila agriculture officer of Kalapara, Patuakhali.

He said in Patuakhali alone over 40,000 hectares of land was inundated by saline water because of the damaged embankments.

"If the dams are not repaired and brackish water flows during high tides, farmers cannot grow Aman crops," he added.

An NGO official in Sathkhira said major breaches on the dam in Gabura union could not be repaired yet.

Thousands of people in Gabura are still staying on the embankment, he said, adding, "They are selling livestock, whatever they still have, at

cheap rates as they cannot feed them. These people have become very vulnerable."

Shahidul Islam, national consultant for Food and Agriculture Organization, said during a recent visit to the Aila-hit areas he found the farmers are leading a miserable life.

"They missed Aus and are going to miss Aman if the embankments are not repaired," he observed.

Developing saline-tolerant varieties is a must for the coastal districts, Shahidul said, adding the authorities must develop the coast's irrigation system for Boro production. Farmers hardly produce Boro in the coast where there is over 10-lakh hectares of arable land.

Meanwhile, the government has decided to provide seeds and fertilisers worth Tk 1,016 each for Aman production to over 3 lakh farmers.

However, speculations are rife that the move may hardly work.

"Saline water will remain and silt with tides would destroy Aman if embankments remain in the miserable shape," comments an agriculturist in Patuakhali.

BNP to join JS

FROM PAGE 1

'appropriate atmosphere' is ensured in parliament, it asserted.

Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abdin Farroque read out the statement at a press briefing at the parliament's media centre.

"We want to remind that the role of ruling party to approve of the opposition party is the spirit of the parliamentary democracy. They [ruling party] should not forget that their existence and tenure will come to an end if there is no opposition party in Parliament," it said.

The BNPP strongly criticised the ruling party lawmakers' recent remarks on late president Ziaur Rahman and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

The BNPP-led opposition lawmakers remain absent in the budget session of the House. In absence of the main opposition lawmakers, the budget for new fiscal year that began today was passed in Parliament yesterday.

It was learnt that most of the BNPP-led opposition lawmakers were willing to join the budget session to take the opportunity of participating in the budget discussion. But they could not do so as BNP high command as well as BNP chairperson were rigid not to join the House after the government cancelled the allocation of BNP chairperson's cantonment residence, a number of BNPL lawmakers said.

Zainul Abdin in its BNPP statement claimed that they want to cooperate the government from the very beginning of the ninth parliament, but the government did not agree to accept it.

"People over the world know how many frigates and gunboats belong to our navy. Nothing is secret here," Idris continued.

He said he does not know why the navy sent such a letter to the newspapers.

Mahbub said the parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry in last parliament also discussed various issues on defence forces including upgrading the navy and newspapers published news based on the meetings.

"After each meeting, I briefed the media so that they could inform the people," he added.

The former army chief went on to say navy placed the report before the parliamentary body, which would discuss it and the people know about it. It is a democratic system, he asserted.

After the June 22 meeting, Idris in a news briefing said Bangladesh Navy made a presentation before the committee highlighting their problems and possible solutions. The force is facing a dearth of equipment, modern ships and manpower in discharging its duties, he added.

Copies of the letter were forwarded to the Armed Forces Division under the PMO, secretariats of the chiefs of the army, navy and air force naval intelligence and the headquarters of the Directorate General of the Forces Intelligence.

Asked about the letter, Idris Ali on Sunday told The Daily Star the navy report contained no secret.

"As public representatives we're working for the people and the people have every right to know about the defence forces. We have made public what we thought was good," Idris, also former defence secretary, said.

Contacted by The Daily Star, Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman, who was chief of the parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry in last parliament, expressed surprise at the news letter.

"I read the news carried by different dailies. I found no secret regarding state security in navy's development plans. Rather I felt good that the parliamentary body has

started working to upgrade navy as a three dimensional force," Mahbub, also former Chief of Staff, commented.

Both Idris and Mahbub said only operational plans of any defence force is considered secret, but the navy's report didn't contain any such plan.

The speaker did not resolve the seating arrangement for the front row despite of his assurance. Besides, the government's behavior towards the opposition leaders is not decent," alleged BNPP.

He said he does not know why the navy sent such a letter to the newspapers.

Mahbub said the parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry in last parliament also discussed various issues on defence forces including upgrading the navy and newspapers published news based on the meetings.

"After each meeting, I briefed the media so that they could inform the people," he added.

The former army chief went on to say navy placed the report before the parliamentary body, which would discuss it and the people know about it. It is a democratic system, he asserted.

After the June 22 meeting, Idris in a news briefing said Bangladesh Navy made a presentation before the committee highlighting their problems and possible solutions. The force is facing a dearth of equipment, modern ships and manpower in discharging its duties, he added.

Copies of the letter were forwarded to the Armed Forces Division under the PMO, secretariats of the chiefs of the army, navy and air force naval intelligence and the headquarters of the Directorate General of the Forces Intelligence.

Asked about the letter, Idris Ali on Sunday told The Daily Star the navy report contained no secret.

"As public representatives we're working for the people and the people have every right to know about the defence forces. We have made public what we thought was good," Idris, also former defence secretary, said.

Contacted by The Daily Star, Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman, who was chief of the parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry in last parliament, expressed surprise at the news letter.

"I read the news carried by different dailies. I found no secret regarding state security in navy's development plans. Rather I felt good that the parliamentary body has

started working to upgrade navy as a three dimensional force," Mahbub, also former Chief of Staff, commented.

Both Idris and Mahbub said only operational plans of any defence force is considered secret, but the navy's report didn't contain any such plan.

The speaker did not resolve the seating arrangement for the front row despite of his assurance. Besides, the government's behavior towards the opposition leaders is not decent," alleged BNPP.

He said he does not know why the navy sent such a letter to the newspapers.

Mahbub said the parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry in last parliament also discussed various issues on defence forces including upgrading the navy and newspapers published news based on the meetings.

"After each meeting, I briefed the media so that they could inform the people," he added.

The former army chief went on to say navy placed the report before the parliamentary body, which would discuss it and the people know about it. It is a democratic system, he asserted.

After the June 22 meeting, Idris in a news briefing said Bangladesh Navy made a presentation before the committee highlighting their problems and possible solutions. The force is facing a dearth of equipment, modern ships and manpower in discharging its duties, he added.

Copies of the letter were forwarded to the Armed Forces Division under the PMO, secretariats of the chiefs of the army, navy and air force naval intelligence and the headquarters of the Directorate General of the Forces Intelligence.

Asked about the letter, Idris Ali on Sunday told The Daily Star the navy report contained no secret.

"As public representatives we're working for the people and the people have every right to know about the defence forces. We have made public what we thought was good," Idris, also former defence secretary, said.

Contacted by The Daily Star, Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman, who was chief of the parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry in last parliament, expressed surprise at the news letter.

"I read the news carried by different dailies. I found no secret regarding state security in navy's development plans. Rather I felt good that the parliamentary body has

started working to upgrade navy as a three dimensional force," Mahbub, also former Chief of Staff, commented.

Both Idris and Mahbub said only operational plans of any defence force is considered secret, but the navy's report didn't contain any such plan.

The speaker did not resolve the seating arrangement for the front row despite of his assurance. Besides, the government's behavior towards the opposition leaders is not decent," alleged BNPP.

He said he does not know why the navy sent such a letter to the newspapers.

Mahbub said the parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry in last parliament also discussed various issues on defence forces including upgrading the navy and newspapers published news based on the meetings.