

Greece heads for further general strike

AFP, Athens

Greek tax and garbage collectors walked off their jobs for a second day yesterday as the country braced for a second general strike against government austerity measures.

Over a million civil servants, workers and private sector staff have been called upon to strike Thursday by the country's two main unions and attend street protests.

The general strike, the second in two weeks, is likely to paralyse much of daily life across the country with ministries, public services, banks and schools shut down and hospitals running on reduced staff.

Flights to and from Greece also will be grounded throughout Thursday as the air traffic controllers' union announced it would join the protest.

"We will participate in the 24-hour strike decided by the unions. There will therefore be no flights going to or coming from Greece from midnight (2200 GMT) Wednesday to midnight Thursday," a spokesman for the Air Traffic Controllers' Association of Greece (EEKE) told AFP Tuesday.

Greece's Aegean Airlines previously announced in a statement it would cancel all its flights Thursday, and moved forward the times of several Wednesday evening flights.

A support strike by sailors will tie up ships at harbour. Rail transport is also likely to be disrupted.

The unions are outraged by a wave of state spending cuts and tax hikes intended to cut this year's deficit of 12.7 percent of output and to get to grips with the country's debt of nearly 300 billion euros (410 billion dollars).

"The government's mea-

sures pile further misery on the lowest wages in Europe, leading to prolonged recession and unemployment," the civil servants' union Adedys said in its strike call.

The spending cuts -- including an unprecedented reduction in paid holiday allowances -- constitute an effective salary reduction of between 20 and 30 percent for civil servants, the unions said.

A new poll late Monday found that 65.3 percent of Greeks believe the austerity measures to be 'unfair'.

The Greek economy, which is mired in a recession, ran into more trouble on Tuesday when the national statistics agency reported the annual inflation rate jumped by four points to 2.8 percent in February.

Unemployment currently stands at over 10 percent.

Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou, currently on an international tour to muster support for Greece's debt-cutting efforts, was scheduled to meet with US President Barack Obama later Tuesday.

Papandreou has urged the United States to crack down on currency speculators amid reports that some US funds have placed big bearish bets against the euro.

Kibria killing

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for Mithu, who had allegedly hurled grenade at Kibria, former finance minister and Awami League lawmaker.

The court fixed today for hearing the petition.

In his petition, the investigation officer of the case said Mithu has admitted his involvement in the killing. He should be interrogated further, as his name came up also in the statement of his co-accused Badrul Alam Mizan.

Rafiqul told The Daily Star, "We are expecting major headway in the investigation."

Rapid Action Battalion arrested Mithu at Habiganj on Saturday night. He was later handed over to Habiganj police, who produced him before the court yesterday.

The CID had Babar on a six-day remand on February 12 in the same case. He was sent back to jail on February 18.

Prothom Alo

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on February 14. It spoke of the probe body and its report on granting of bails by an HC bench on November 23 and 24 last year.

The petitioner stated that the Prothom Alo report has tarnished the dignity and image of the HC and its judges.

Advocate Mostafa Golam Kibria appeared for the petitioner.

SP Kohinoor

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superintendent of police of Mymensingh Kohinoor opened fire on people at a polling centre in Nandail in 2004 without any provocation.

The police action at Achargan High School polling centre in Nandail during the municipality elections on May 9, 2004 left Abu Taher and Sujan of the area dead.

Following the probe report, the home ministry issued a show-cause notice upon Kohinoor in newspapers asking him to defend himself.

Earlier, a show-cause notice was issued to his address to which he did not reply, sources in the home ministry said.

If he fails to respond to the show-cause notice within the specified time, charges will be pressed against him and he will lose his job, the sources added.

Asked whether Kohinoor is drawing salaries, the IGP could not say for sure.

However, an official at the police headquarters said he was not.

Seeking anonymity an official at the police headquarters maintained the internal enquiry report had said controversial police officer Kohinoor Mian, now on the run, sought to prove through forged documents that Sujan's father and Taher's wife signed affidavits claiming that they were not killed in police action.

The official said both denied before the enquiry committee that they had ever signed any affidavits. Substantiating the probe committee findings, Taher's wife told The Daily Star recently that she had never signed any affidavit.

Sujan's father Mohammad Ali, however, said he filed a petition with a Mymensingh court about 15 days after the killing of his son in which he mentioned that he could not identify the killers and would accuse none for the murder.

The three-member enquiry committee to investigate the police firing at Nandail was formed in June last year. The committee submitted its report to the police headquarters on November 6 last year,

said the source.

"After thorough enquiry we have submitted the report to the police headquarters about 20 days back," Deputy Inspector General of CID Nazmul Haq, who led the three-member team, told The Daily Star on November 25.

Two other members of the committee are Dhaka District SP Iqbal Bahar and Deputy Commissioner of Detective Branch of Police Monirul Islam.

The enquiry report said police opened fire during the municipality election without the slightest provocation. It also accused Kohinoor of misusing power and negligence in discharging his duty.

Nandail upazila vice-chairman, who was present there during the incident, said he along with some local Awami League leaders protested sub-Inspector Mosharraf Hossain's action after about 10 female voters alleged that police had forced them to return home without casting votes around noon.

SI Mosharraf left and a few minutes later he returned with some other policemen and started clubbing people, he said.

"In the blink of an eye Kohinoor Mian appeared and as Mosharraf told him something, he beckoned me and some other local Awami League leaders," Shafiqul said, adding that as soon as they went to Kohinoor he started punching them.

Shafiqul was arrested and taken to a room from where he heard two gunshots. "I did not see who fired but before police took me away I saw a revolver in the hand of Kohinoor who asked me to go away, otherwise he would shoot me," Shafiqul told The Daily Star.

Rezaul Islam, who was on-duty magistrate at Nandail municipality elections, told The Daily Star he did not order police to open fire and said the situation on that day did not call for police firing.

Rezaul Islam declined to make any further comment but said he had given his version in his statement submitted to the government at that time.

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Seed sellers

FROM PAGE 1

Conference Centre in the capital.

Referring to a company that sold low quality seed this Boro season, Matia said, "If this happens again I will make its name public so that farmers no more buy seed from that company."

Calling upon the private companies to invest on research and development of genetically engineered crops, the agriculture minister said, "It is you who will make profit once you develop high quality seeds."

Matia said regional cooperation in sharing seeds could greatly help ensure food security. It is imperative that the South Asian nations consider the issue from the farmers' perspective to feed the people of the region, which frequently suffers from floods, drought and salinity.

The government is trying to strike a balance between farmers' fair price and consumers' purchasing capacity, she said, adding that commodity prices doubled after the Awami League government's tenure in 2001, but none could bring it down.

"We have done it," she claimed.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni said it was of immense importance that the south Asian nations work together to strengthen food security. Ensuring quality seeds through regional cooperation could greatly help achieve the goal.

Making Saarc Food Bank effective is very important too, she observed.

Additional Secretary of the agriculture ministry Anwar Faruque in his keynote presentation said only up to 30 percent seed in South Asia is of standard quality, while it is below 18 percent in Bangladesh.

"We can ensure adequate production of crops by making sure that 60 percent seed is of standard quality," he said.

Saarc Seed Forum An ad hoc Saarc Seed Forum was constituted with Anwar Faruque as its convener. It will work to establish a full-fledged autonomous Saarc Seed Forum to promote sustainable development of seed system in the region so that farmers of one country can reap the benefit from the innovation of other countries.

Director of Saarc Agriculture Centre Rafiqul Islam Mondal proclaimed the purpose of the forum at the programme.

Agriculture Secretary CQK Mustaq, Food and Agriculture Organisation Bangladesh Representative Ad Spijkers, Malavika Dadlani, head of India's Division of Seed Science and Technology and BSA President Mahboob Anam also spoke at the programme.

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Padma Bridge

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In particular the communications ministry, and Bangladesh Bridge Authority for moving expeditiously with the preparatory work for the tender, and reiterated the donors' firm commitment for providing assistance.

Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain told The Daily Star on Monday that the document containing bidders' pre-qualification criteria will be sent to WB for final clearance within this week.

"We are hoping to float the tender any time now," he said.

The World Bank is now waiting for receiving the minutes of a meeting between the donors and the finance ministry where key decisions were taken regarding the design of the bridge, and the procurement methods for its construction.

The decisions include that the proposed Padma Bridge will comprise rail and road ways; the rail track and related viaducts, and other facilities will be built linked with a project for extending the

railway to the country's south-west region; and the contract for constructing the main bridge will be awarded through a single international competitive bidding.

There will be two stages to the bidding process, with a limited first stage based on the design prepared by design consultants.

According to the communications ministry's proposal, the bridge will be 6.15 km long, and will be constructed by December 2013. The bridge will connect 19 districts of the south-western part of the country with the eastern part including the capital, and it will be linked with the Asian Highway.

Of the \$2.4 billion financing, different development partners have agreed to co-finance about \$2.2 billion, of which the WB will provide \$1.2 billion, Asian Development Bank \$550 million, Islamic Development Bank \$130 million, Japan International Cooperation Agency \$300 million, and Abudhabi Fund \$31.4 million.

Pro-people projects

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for offering them health advice.

In reply, Hasina said mobile phone services have become widely available in Bangladesh now as her previous government had opened the market for cell phone companies.

The WHO top official said she strongly believes that health situation of Bangladesh will improve to a significant level under the visionary leadership of Hasina.

She also hailed the government for giving importance to the improvement of nursing services in the country.

Hasina, in reply, said the Awami League government during its first tenure started some health development projects to bring modern medical treatment to the doorsteps of the village people.

One of such projects, she mentioned, was setting up 18,000 community health clinics, of which 11,000 clinics across the country were started, but the next BNP-Jamaat government had closed the clinics and the whole project on political ground.

However, the present

government has taken steps to re-establish all the community health clinics for greater interest of the people, the PM said.

Bangladesh is now on the right track of achieving the targeted growth, Dr Chan said.

The WHO chief also lauded Hasina and her government for taking effective steps to implement the Women Development Policy.

The premier said her government has also undertaken a policy not to let one inch of land remain uncultivated in order to increase food production of the country.

She said steps are being taken to implement 'one farm one homestead' policy to make the rural people economically self-reliant and also to produce organic foods.

During the meeting, they also discussed solar energy and solar panel as an alternative to increasing power generation.

Health Minister Dr AFM Ruhul Huq, Health Adviser to the Prime Minister Prof Syed Modasser Ali, Secretary to the PM's office Mollah Waheeduzzaman and PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad were present.

Revised budget

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statement informing the House about the progress in implementation of the budget, the sources added.

According to the sub-sections-2 and-3 of section-12 of the Public Money and Budget Management Act, 2009, the finance ministry is supposed to place a revised budget in parliament for every financial year in March, following articles 87, 88, 89, 90 and 91 of the constitution.

"The section-12 (2) of the law contradicts with the articles 87, 88, 89, 90 and 91 of the constitution. Therefore, revised budget cannot be placed in parliament in March," Rahmat Ali, a member of the Business Advisory Committee, told The Daily Star yesterday at his office in parliament.

The constitution does not allow placing such budget in the middle of a financial year and such practice is not seen in other parliaments including the House of Commons in the UK and the Lok Sabha in India, he added.

"The provision should be amended to make it conform with the constitution," he said. He said the provision in fact is automatically void as it contradicts with the constitution, the supreme law of the land.

He said the finance minister would make a statement in this session after March 11 on the progress of implementation of the budget for this fiscal year, income and expenditure, and the overall economic situation.

According to section-15 (4) of the Public Money and Budget Management Act, 2009, the finance minister is supposed to issue a statement in parliament every quarter specifying the progress of implementation of budget and other issues.

But the finance minister did not make any statement in last eight months since the beginning of this 2009-10 fiscal year.

The last caretaker government enacted Public Money and Budget Management Act, 2009, through promulgation

of an ordinance. The ordinance ceased to have effect on February 25, 2009. The Awami League led government placed a bill in parliament and enacted the law in last July.

Mig-29 case

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petitioner in the first information report and the charge sheet of the MiG-29 corruption case.

So, framing charge by the trial court against the petitioner in this case was illegal, it also observed.

The Bac filed the case with Tejjao police station on December 11, 2001 on charges of causing a loss of Tk 700 crore to the state exchequer by purchasing eight MiG-29 fighter planes. The case was later shifted to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

The trial court on August 20, 2008, framed charges against Hasina in her absence.

Following a writ filed by Hasina, the HC on September 18, 2008, stayed the trial proceedings against her, and issued a rule on the government, the ACC and the trial court to explain why framing charges against Hasina in her absence should not be declared illegal.

Hasina

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topped the list.

India's PepsiCo Chief Executive Indra Nooyi scored the second position followed by Congress Chief Sonia Gandhi.

Among others, Singapore government-owned investment company Temasek Chief Executive Ho Ching was placed fourth, India's ICICI Bank Head Chanda Kochhar fifth, South Korean Conglomerate Hyundai Chairperson Hyun Jeong-eun seventh and Indonesian Finance Minister Sri Indrawati eighth in the list.

"As the world celebrates its 100th International Women's Day, we take a look at the key women who are shaping Asia's political and economic landscape," CNN said in a report.

BNP MPs

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Moudud Ahmed took the floor and bitterly criticised the government for this move.

"The government is out to erase the name of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman instead of taking steps to improve law and order, arrest price hike of essentials and ensure supply of power and gas to reduce people's sufferings," Moudud said.

The former law minister further said, "Inshallah, we will sit in the treasury bench after the next election. And we will amend the law to name Barisal University again after Ziaur Rahman... We are now walking out of parliament protesting the bill."

In response, the education minister said the BNP government passed the law concerning the university but did nothing to establish it.

"I visited Barisal. People there demanded that the government rename the university as Barisal University. We are just honouring their desire," Nahid said.

The opposition lawmakers then staged the walkout at 3:50pm and returned to the House at 4:05 pm.

The bill was sent to the parliamentary standing committee on education ministry for scrutiny.

Interestingly, BNP lawmakers delayed their walkout for a few minutes in response to a call from the speaker.

Speaker Abdul Hamid asked them to hear the education minister's response to Moudud's speech. And they did so.

Fresh drive

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A mosque on the list of the eviction was given a period of seven days to remove.

BIWTA Deputy Director (port) Alamgir Kabir said all the structures were in Laxman Kutubpur mouja under Ruggan.

"Eviction of river encroachers will only help restore the river to how it was in the recent past," said Alamgir.

BIWTA with two tugboats, Agrajtra and Agrabahak, two workboats and around 200 labourers carried out the drive. The drive will resume next Monday.

Earlier, the district administration has identified a total of 320 structures on Shitalakhya, Balu and Buriganga rivers under the district's jurisdiction as per Revisional Survey records.

Deputy Commissioner of Narayanganj Shamsur Rahman said most of the encroachers had taken out lease on the rivers from BIWTA.

Sources said a total of 1158 acres of river area of the three rivers have been occupied by around 3010 illegal structures that has reduced the width of the rivers.

Following a High Court order on June 25 last year, Narayanganj district administration submitted a report on the status of river encroachment as per RS and Cadastral Survey records to the court in December.

The authorities carried out an eviction drive in June the same year for 11 days and demolished 134 illegal structures including makeshift ones on the rivers.

Bhairab

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educational institutions from January 2009 to February 2010. Of these, 23 institutions, mostly madrasas, are situated in Kuliarchar and Bhairab upazilas, according to a list revealed in parliament yesterday.

Replying to a query of BNP lawmaker Nazim Uddin Ahmed, Planning Minister Air-Vice Marshal (ret'd) AK Khandker, who is also in charge of the president's office in parliamentary business, revealed the list.

According to the list, the president donated Tk 62.03 lakh to 1,134 individuals in the last 14 months. Of them, 120 individuals hailed from the two upazilas.

The president also donated Tk 17.75 lakh to 343 individuals in last two months and 79 of them are from Bhairab and Kuliarchar.

Zillur was elected lawmaker in the December 29 parliamentary elections from Kishoreganj-6 constituency, which is constituted by these two upazilas.

On his election to the office of the president, the seat fell vacant and his son Nazmul Hasan was elected MP in a by-election.

The president donates the money from his discretionary fund in line with the policy circulated by the Cabinet Division on March 20, 1978. The past caretaker government increased the fund's amount to Tk 1 crore from Tk 50 lakh.

Grabbing lands

FROM PAGE 1

Faruq alleged in the complaint.

But instead of taking back the supplied fertilizer, Mizan started to threaten Faruq with 'crossfire' if the latter did not pay a demanded sum of Tk 25 lakh for the goods, the written complaint says, adding that Mizan also claimed he was a relative of the prime minister, he was very powerful, and could do anything he wanted.

Finally fearing for his own life, Faruq deposited three cheques of a total Tk 11.5 lakh to Mizan's bank account, until which the SP had been harassing Faruq using police forces of different districts, according to the complaint. Mizan even had Faruq tortured in Bagerhat Sadar police station, alleges the written complaint.

"When Mizanur Rahman was the SP of Faridpur in April last year, his factory manager filed a false case against me with Jatrabari police in Dhaka accusing me of cheating. Jatrabari police came to Chittagong, arrested me from my Double Mooring residence, and took me to Dhaka," Omar Faruq told The Daily Star yesterday adding,

"When, he was the SP of B