

LDP asks about BNP's poll plans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) leaders yesterday placed a number of queries before BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir regarding BNP's plans on possible unity with other political parties, its movements and the next parliamentary election.

The LDP delegation, led by the party Secretary General Jahanara Begum, met Alamgir at his Uttara residence in the morning.

Meeting sources said when LDP leaders wanted to know what the name of the alliance would be if they did join, Alamgir replied that it would be discussed at BNP's standing committee meeting and among the four-party alliance.

Bangladesh Kalyan Party Chairman Maj Gen (ret) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim also met with Alamgir at the latter's Uttara residence in the evening where he supported BNP's stance against the 15th amendment of the constitution.

"We are against the fifteenth amendment. Election will not be acceptable if it is not held under a non-party caretaker government," said Ibrahim.

Alamgir also urged Ibrahim to join the opposition camp. As per decision at the meeting, Ibrahim will meet BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia soon to hold further discussion in this regard.

Alamgir also held a separate meeting with leaders of eight other political parties at BNP central office in the city's Naya Paltan. The parties are Jatiya Ganatantrik Party, Labour Party, Muslim League, Islamic Party, National People's Party, National Democratic Party, National Awami Party (NAP) (vasani) and Bangladesh NAP.

Alamgir said the eight parties extended their support to BNP's countrywide demonstration being observed today protesting price hike of essentials and issuance of arrest warrant against BNP Senior Vice Chairman Tarique Rahman.



Sewage spills out onto the Tejgaon-Gulshan link road in the city yesterday due to a fault in the drainage pipes, causing suffering to passers-by.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

UP chairman arrested on charge of torturing two women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The union parishad (UP) chairman who allegedly led the cruel torture on two women in the name of village arbitration in Rangpur on June 26, was arrested from the capital yesterday.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), an elite force, arrested Madhupur UP Chairman Aynal Haque and his associate Saiful Islam Mandal from Kakrail area around 11:45am.

Some influential villagers led by the chairman beat up Hafiza Begum Happy and her sister Saheda Begum mercilessly in the arbitration at Kashiganj village of Badarganj upazila.

According to the witnesses, they beat up both the women by tying up their hands and legs in presence of several hundred people, leaving them senseless. The victims were beaten up again after their recovery.

The arbitration held Happy and Shaheda responsible for the death of Happy's husband Hashem Ali, who committed suicide on June 25 by taking poison.

Later, an officer of the women and children affairs department filed a case against 17 villagers, including the chairman, on July 6 in connection with the torture.

Police earlier arrested Enamul Haque, Awami League president of Madhupur union unit, Enamul Haque, BNP president of the union and Mahbubur Rahman, a local.

Major Kurshid Alam, deputy director of legal and media wing of Rab, said during the primary interrogation Aynal admitted that he was present at the arbitration.

"Both AL leader Enamul and BNP leader Enamul beat the women roping their legs and hands," said a Rab official quoting Aynal.

29 power stations to begin operation by December

Says BPC chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, CTG

The chief of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation said here yesterday the government is already selling fuel at highly subsidised prices as business leaders claimed to have been spending huge money for alternative energy due to chronic power crisis and wanted fuel at subsidised rates.

The BPC purchases diesel at Tk 75.62 per litre while it sells the fuel at Tk 46 a litre, said Maj (ret) Moktadir Ali, chairman of the state-run organisation. He added the corporation sells furnace oil at Tk 42 a litre, though its purchase rate stands at Tk 60.71.

The BPC chairman said 29 power stations, with three in Chittagong, will start operating across the country by this December so that power demand is mitigated.

Moktadir Ali was speaking at a meeting with the leaders of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BGMEA) at its Chittagong regional office yesterday.

The BGMEA leaders said the garments factories in Chittagong have to spend Tk 1,350 crore a year on diesel for alternative energy.

They also alleged non-cooperation from the Power Development Board (PDB).

BGMEA First Vice-president Nasir Uddin Chowdhury said the RMG sector pays Tk 2,000 crore as "electricity charges" to the PDB annually, but the board officials do not respond to their call in emergencies. "Even the chief engineer of PDB does not receive my phone call despite frequent attempts", he said, adding that the PDB takes 15-20 days to replace a collapsed transformer, leaving power supply snapped to the industrial units.

The BGMEA leader said as RMG is an export-oriented sector, the factory owners cannot keep production shut and have to resort to generators, paying a lot for fuels. He asserted that the government institutions like PDB and BPC should classify RMG factories as

important clients.

Addressing the meeting, State Minister for Power, Fuel, and Mineral Resources Brig Gen (ret) Enamul Hoque said Chittagong is a commercial hub of the country when RMG is the most important industrial sector; so RMG deserves priority for power and fuel supply.

Later, the state minister also talked in another meeting with the directors of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) at the conference room of the CCCI.

During the meeting, he assured the chamber leaders for all-out cooperation from his part in supplying power and gas on priority basis to the World Trade Centre (WTC), first of its kind in the country, which will open in the port city this December.

MA Latif, an Awami League lawmaker and also former president of the CCCI, said Chittagong should be given priority not for its sake, but also for the country's sake.

Two puffed rice factories fined Tk 1 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court organised by Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution yesterday fined two puffed rice manufacturing factories in the city's Shanir Akhra a total of Tk 1 lakh for using sodium hydrosulfide in their product.

The court also destroyed 9,600 kilogrammes of puffed rice from the factories due to use of the sodium hydrosulfide, which is very harmful for human health, says a press release.

The factories are Macca Food Products in Gobindapur Bazar and Khaza Food Products in Gobindapur of Baganbari road.

Executive Magistrate Mohammad Al Amin, who led the drive, also asked the authority concerned to file a case against the owner of Khaza Food Products as he was absconding.

HR mechanism for South Asia stressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a regional workshop have said South Asia needs a strong human rights mechanism to check gross human rights violations and abuses in the region.

They also discussed human rights challenges in the region and the prospects and opportunities for creation of South Asian Human Rights Mechanism within the framework of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc).

The two-day workshop was organised by the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum-ASIA) and Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC) in Kathmandu, Nepal on July 25-26, says a press release.

Subodh Raj Pyakurel, chairperson of Forum-ASIA and INSEC, said the workshop brought together civil society leaders, academicians, and national human rights institutions (NHRIs) to strongly advocate for the mechanism in South Asia.

In his keynote address, Kul Chandra Gautam, former assistant secretary-general of the United Nations, said national human rights mechanism is the most important and effective means to recognise and respect human rights.

The regional mechanism, however, can complement the national mechanism, especially in addressing cross border issues, he said.



President Zillur Rahman addresses the deputy commissioners at Bangabhaban in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

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