

Fuel prices

FROM PAGE 1
Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC), but this time the process was bypassed, said Syed Yusuf Hossain, chairman of BERC.

The government can increase the prices of petroleum products through an executive order. Public hearing is not mandatory, Yusuf added.

"The hearing process is too long. That's why sometimes the government increases the prices of the products through executive orders," Yusuf told The Daily Star yesterday.

Asked about the reason behind the move, Energy Secretary Mesbahuddin Ahmed said the government is counting a huge subsidy on imports of petroleum products as the prices on the international market have recently increased.

The decision will cut the annual subsidy on petroleum products by Tk 3,500 crore to Tk 14,500 crore, said Mesbahuddin.

He, however, said the price hike will have a bad impact on people's daily spending, but there was no alternative.

Mesbahuddin said he has already met high officials of the communications ministry to take measures to increase bus fares in line with the fuel prices.

The government's borrowing from the banking system is increasing due to high subsidy on petroleum products, the officials said. The government has already borrowed Tk 5,000 crore from banks between July and August.

The government plans to import 70 lakh tonnes of fuel this year, up from 54 lakh tonnes last year.

Zaid Bakht, research director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, said the fuel price hike was expected. "Without price adjustments, there would have been serious budgetary implications," he said, warning about rising inflation.

Inflation rose to 11.29 percent in August from 10.96 percent in July due to an increase in non-food costs in the face of rising fuel prices, transport fares, clothing prices and household expenses.

"It is definitely going to have an impact on rising inflation," Bakht said. He warned that the fuel price hike will increase production costs in factories and transport fares, piling pressure on commodity prices.

He suggested that the government take steps to keep food prices stable through increased market intervention. "The government must increase its market intervention capacity."

The government last increased the prices of petroleum products on May 5.

Prior to yesterday's price hike, the government was providing Tk 33.44 subsidy for per litre diesel, Tk 32.49 for kerosene, Tk 8.02 for octane and Tk 12.96 for furnace oil, the government said in a statement.

Sikkim quake

FROM PAGE 1
Four rental power plants in Tangail, Thakurgaon, Jessore and Syedpur went off for nearly 30 minutes on impact of the quake, said Saiful Hasan Chowdhury, director of public relations department of the Power Development Board.

Nearly 300 miners at Baropukuria coal mine remained trapped for about 20 minutes for power failure caused by the quake. They were rescued after power supply was restored, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

Prof Mehdi Ahmed Ansary said the capital did not face any widespread damage as the earthquake's epicentre was far away and its hypocentre was 21 km below the surface.

Many buildings would have been damaged in the capital and elsewhere if the tremor had recorded a 7.5 magnitude with a higher depth of its hypocentre, he said.

Giving an example, Mehdi said a 7.5 magnitude tremor jolted the Mexico City in 1985 damaging all high-rises in the city. The earthquake's epicentre was in the sea -- nearly 700 km off the city, he said.

Mehdi said there are lands that had been developed by filling up wetlands. The buildings built there are highly vulnerable to earthquake.

Victims were not robbers

FROM PAGE 1
Inspector General of Police Amir Uddin, who headed the probe body, told a press briefing at the police headquarters yesterday.

"During our investigation, nobody said that the six students killed and the other injured were robbers. Nor did we find any evidence to prove that."

"We recommended departmental actions against some personnel of Savar Police Station for their negligence to duty," Amir Uddin said.

A one-member judicial probe body that submitted its report on September 8 found that some officers of Savar Police Station were "involved in the killings".

Early hours on July 18, a mob at Bardeshi village at Aminbazar beat six boys, all school and college students, dead and another injured in police presence taking them for robbers, witnesses and the lone survivor said.

The dead are Tipu Sultan of Tejgaon College, Towhidur Rahman Palash, Kamruzzaman Kanto and Ibrahim Khalil of Mirpur Bangla College; Shams Rahim Shamam of Maple

Leaf International School, and Sitaf Jabi Munif of Bangladesh University of Business and Technology.

The next day, Abdul Malek, a sand trader of Aminbazar, filed a robbery case accusing the seven. On the same day, Savar police filed a murder case against 500 to 600 unnamed people of Bardeshi village.

Strangely, the police case too branded the victims as robbers. The case did not even mention that they were students although the police officer who filed the case talked to their parents and relatives and collected details before filing the case.

As the role of Savar police came under question, Inspector General of Police Hassan Mahmood Khandker formed the four-member committee on July 21.

The three other members are Masud Karim, special superintendent (SS) of Special Branch, Sheikh Rezaul Haider, SS of Criminal Investigation Department (CID), and Dhaka district Additional Superintendent of Police Sheikh Rafiqul Islam.

The 216-page report was prepared following an impar-

tial investigation, said Amir Uddin, the additional IGP.

"We've investigated the police role, not the crimes. The CID is investigating both the cases now," he added.

He, however, declined to comment on whether any robbery took place in the area that night.

A top official of the police HQ told The Daily Star the probe found that the robbery case filed by the sand trader was false.

It was lodged to hide the actual fact and save those who led the killing as well as the policemen who played a part in it, he added.

Eight policemen of Savar Police Station were closed on September 11, three days after the judicial probe report was submitted.

"Not only those eight policemen who were present on the spot, many other policemen of Savar Police Station were involved in covering up the incident," said the police official seeking anonymity.

The eight, however, told the probe committee that they did not take any steps to save the students fearing that the mob might attack them, he added.

Military leaders meet to salvage US-Pakistan ties

AFP, Washington

The top US and Pakistani military leaders met in Spain to discuss ways to shore up strained ties after a US raid that killed al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and a spike in violence in Afghanistan, a Pentagon spokesman said.

Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mike Mullen and his Pakistani counterpart General Ashfaq Kayani sat down for more than two hours of talks late Friday on the sidelines of a Nato conference in Seville, Mullen's spokesman Captain John Kirby told AFP Saturday.

"They agreed that the relationship between our two countries remained vital to the region and that both sides had taken positive steps to improve that relationship over the past few months," Kirby said.

"They also discussed the state of military-to-military cooperation and pledged to continue to find ways to make it better."

It was the first meeting between the pair since the May 2 night-time military raid in which US Navy Seals, without first notifying Islamabad, killed the al-Qaeda leader in the compound in Abbottabad where he had been hiding.

As relations worsened in the aftermath of the raid, Washington announced that it could cut some of the \$2.7 billion in military aid it sends to Pakistan.

Islamabad, for its part, ordered as many as 200 US military trainers out of the country in the aftermath of the operation.

US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has expressed frustration that Islamabad has so far failed to crack down on Haqqani network militants that Washington suspects attacked the US embassy and Nato headquarters in Kabul on September 13-14.

The was launched by militants firing rocket-propelled grenades at the heavily fortified embassy. At least a half dozen rocket-propelled grenades landed inside the compound, killing 15 people dead.

Ship-breaking

FROM PAGE 20
Fortune Ship-Breaking Yard.

He was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries around 5:00am, said Jahid Iqbal, director of the ship-breaking yard.

With this, eight people have so far died in five separate accidents in four ship-breaking yards this year.

Four workers were killed at Mak Corporation Ship-Breaking Yard on January 18, one at Mahin Enterprise Ship-Breaking Yard on March 15, one at Fortune Ship-Breaking Yard on September 17 and one at Peninsula Super Ship Yard on August 20.

Little care for luggage

FROM PAGE 20
could not find it.

On April 26, Showkat lodged a complaint with Etihad authorities at the airport and made frantic efforts to get back the missing items throughout his stay in the country only to be further disappointed.

Frustrated, he left for Canada on May 6.

Contacted in mid-June, Executive (operation) Shambhu Nath Pal of Etihad's Dhaka office told The Daily Star they were yet to trace the lost bag.

However, Showkat's case is not a stray incident.

On an average, 120 arriving passengers have to leave the airport without luggage every day, airport sources said.

Cases of missing luggage shoot up three to four times in the peak season between November and February, they added.

An airport official, preferring anonymity, said over 3,600 luggage of incoming travellers went missing in

June alone.

In June alone, the national flag carrier Biman lost 950 bags, Saudi Airlines 700, Indian Express 500, Pakistan International Airways 200 and Gulf Airways 250 luggage that month.

Several high officials of Shahjalal airport, preferring anonymity, said the authorities almost take no step to check luggage missing.

The department that handles flyers' luggage has 200 employees while the requirement is over 300. And, they do the work manually.

In 2010, they added, the airport authorities planned to introduce automated Baggage Reconciliation System.

As part of the scheme, the authorities need eight machines which have yet to be procured.

Contacted, a director of the airport said the airport will switch to automation but it will take time.

As per the International

Doctor for the poor

FROM PAGE 1

For checkup, he charges Tk 5 from the patients living within three kilometres of the centre and Tk 10 from those living beyond. After checkup, patients get the required medicine from the centre whether they can afford it or not.

Every day, around 100 outpatients get treatment and medicine for diabetes, tuberculosis (TB), fever, cough, burn injuries, stomach problems and complications related to pregnancy, among others.

Those needing long-time treatment are admitted to the 35-bed centre that has diabetes, TB, diarrhoea, burn and mother and child units. The admission fee for an inpatient is Tk 100, and that's all they will ever have to pay no matter how long they have to stay at the centre. Everything else involving treatment, medicine and food are provided at free of cost, locals and officials of the centres said.

In addition, Dr Baker, locally known as *Daktar Bhai*, has trained up 89 young boys and girls as health assistants and paramedics who visit the neighbouring villages to give treatment to the sick people, especially the pregnant mothers and newborns.

Set up on a four-acre land at Kailakuri village under Madhupur upazila, Kailakuri Health Care Centre has two special programmes -- one for diabetes patients and the other for mother and children.

Some 1,100 diabetic patients receive treatment under the diabetes programme that covers four upazilas of Tangail, Jamalpur and Mymensingh districts. The mother and child programme covers 17 villages around the centre.

Asked why he has chosen Bangladesh to realise his dream, Baker said the people here are "really good" and they do not get healthcare due to poverty. "I've chosen this country in order to give them a

little health support."

"All patients are required to pay a little. It is because they are not aware of their rights as patients. But none is turned away because they are too poor to pay," said the 70-year-old, who chose to remain single so he has "no bond" that would pull him back from fully devoting his life to the helpless.

Born into a noble family in 1941, Baker obtained his MBBS degree from Otego Medical College at Dunedin in New Zealand in 1965.

Subsequently, he joined a government medical team and served in war-ravaged Vietnam till 1975. He then went to Australia and England and took several courses on child health.

He came to Bangladesh in 1979. However, he heard about the sufferings of the Bangladeshi people in the hands of the Pakistani forces during the Liberation War in 1971 when he was in Vietnam.

First, he joined a Christian mission hospital in Meherpur. After two years, he moved to Kumudini Hospital in Mirzapur where he worked for eight months.

He then joined a clinic run by the Church of Bangladesh at Thanarbaid of Madhupur upazila in 1983 but soon realised that he needed to learn Bangla if he really wanted to understand his patients, many of them indigenous people. In a year, he learned to communicate in Bangla from Jalchhatra Christian Mission in Madhupur. Dr Baker now speaks fluent Bangla.

Immediately after joining the Church of Bangladesh clinic, he opened a small healthcare centre at Kailakuri as the number of patients was growing at the clinic.

Finally, in 1996, he set up the Kailakuri Health Care Centre.

Sholakuri union Chairman Yakub Ali said that before the centre was set up, locals had to go to Madhupur, which is 20 km from the village, for treat-

Air Transport Association rules airlines are bound to pay up when they lose or damage passengers' luggage, sources said.

The airport hardly helps passengers get the compensation, and as a result, the carriers get away with it.

Besides, bags and cases often fall from the carts and the carousels, or their tags are often torn off, sources said.

Mohammad Monir Hossain of Dhanmondi said he landed at the airport at 1:20pm on July 1 by a Turkish Airlines flight and while receiving his luggage he found his 55 inches TV set worth over Tk 2 lakh damaged.

He said he had informed the carrier about the matter but it gave him no satisfactory answer.

Meanwhile, Showkat Alam Khan's mother passed away last month. He returned to the country a few days before her death and left again after the funeral, but Etihad Airways has yet to trace his missing luggage.

Khulna

FROM PAGE 20
dormitories by 6:00pm yesterday.

"I had no other option but to go for this tough decision in order to save the college and the hospital from deadlock due to the unruly activities of a group of troublemakers, who are creating unrest and panic among patients," said Kazi Hamid Asgar, acting principal of KMCH.

Protesting the closure, a faction of Swachip besieged his office, confining him till 2:30pm, witnesses said.

Police later rescued Hamid, also the superintendent of KMCH, and escorted him to his house.

Four platoons of police were deployed in and outside the hospital and the college.

Last week's unrest ensued when two groups of the Swachip scuffled over selection of the chief guest at a function for installing an endoscopic machine at gastroenterology department of KMCH.

On Thursday, doctors loyal to Sheikh Baharul Alam, president of Swachip's Khulna unit, assaulted Hamid.

Hamid alleged that Baharul's men assaulted him as he opposed inviting Baharul as the chief guest of the function.

Students backed by the faction also staged a sit-in programme on the campus on Saturday demanding Hamid's removal.

Khaleda

FROM PAGE 20

"Chairperson Khaleda Zia will deliver an important speech at the rally and declare the next course of anti-government action," Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, acting secretary general of BNP, said at a press conference at its central office in the capital.

No senior members of the party were present at the briefing.

Fakhrul said Khaleda Zia at the rally is likely to declare programmes like road marches and demonstrations.

Khaleda Zia, also the leader of the opposition in the House, is expected to lead road marches towards seven divisional headquarters from early next month, party sources say.

She might also visit at least 19 districts to attend more than a hundred public meetings in an attempt to drum up support for the BNP-led anti-government movement.

Since the 2008 electoral debacle, the September 27 rally will be BNP's first mass gathering where leaders of the four-party alliance and like-minded parties will deliver speeches.

Urging all to attend the rally, Fakhrul said the fall of the Awami League government has now become essential and that is why BNP wants a fresh election under a caretaker system.

Responding to a question, Fakhrul said the party had already sought permission from the authorities concerned to stage the rally at the venue around 2:00pm.

"If permission is not granted, the venue of the rally will be shifted to the party's central office," he said, alleging the government hinders democratic practices by obstructing the meetings of the opposition in public places.

Bangladesh Kalyan Party has agreed to attend the BNP's rally aiming to strengthen the movement for restoration of caretaker government system.

Party chairman Maj Gen (ret'd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim gave his consent last night during a meeting with Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office.

BNP acting Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and Kalyan Party Secretary General Abdul Malek Chowdhury were present in the meeting.

"Inshallah, we will attend the rally. As a freedom fighter I will always stand beside the people. I think caretaker government system is urgent for continuation of healthy democratic practices," Ibrahim told The Daily Star last night.

BNP chairperson's media wing member Shairul Kabir Khan said the meeting discussed the country's latest political situation and as per the discussion, Kalyan Party leaders and workers will attend the September 27 rally.