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Fuel price hike draws criticism

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has presented the people with a New Year gift by increasing the fuel price, BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said yesterday, adding that it would increase miseries in public life.

"The government has increased fuel price for the second time within two months. Prices of all products and transport fares will go up again due to the decision," he said while addressing a discussion at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh auditorium in the city.

The government increased prices of all types of fuel oils by Tk 5 from Thursday midnight.

Jatiyatabadi Krishok Dal, a front body of the BNP, organised the discussion on the occasion of its 33rd founding anniversary when its General Secretary Shamsuzzaman Dudu was present.

Fakhru also made a blistering attack on the government, saying it has created an anarchic situation in the country through secret killings, torture and filing of false cases to eliminate the opposition.

The BNP leader said government is taking such strategies "only to stay in power".

"The government has organised a dialogue by the president. We are going to attend the dialogue, as we believe in lawful movements and the formal way of handing over power. We will tell the president that no election would be allowed in the country without a non-party caretaker government," he added.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon MP and General Secretary Anisur

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Numerous arches have been built on a Gopalganj thoroughfare to welcome Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The photo was taken yesterday.

Gopalganj waits to greet PM

32 arches in one km road

A CORRESPONDENT, Gopalganj

With over 32 arches raised in just a kilometre stretch of a road, Gopalganj has turned into a town of arches to receive the PM who is due to arrive there today.

From Ghonapara bus stand to Haridaspur, over 50 arches were illegally built while many new ones were still coming up.

The arches were made on behalf of District Awami League, Upazila Awami League, Shadhinota Chikitsak Parishad, District unit of Freedom Fighters, Zila Parishad, Sadar Upazila Parishad, Mayor of Gopalganj Municipality, Government Bangabandhu University College, Government Fazilatunnesa Women

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Hamidullah Khan passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Veteran freedom fighter M Hamidullah Khan Bir Pratik, one of the sector commanders of the Liberation War, passed away at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in the capital yesterday.

He was 74.

Hamidullah, a retired wing commander and a former BNP lawmaker, left behind his wife, two sons and a host of relatives and

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Biman in severe fund crunch

Board sits today to find way out

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Biman Bangladesh Airlines' financial crisis has turned so grave that the national flag carrier is now struggling to manage its regular expenditure while its payable to different organisations piles up by the day.

Biman owes Tk 247 crore-plus to its fuel supplier Padma Oil, more than Tk 270 crore to Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) and Tk 56 crore to National Board of Revenue (NBR) in travel taxes, Biman officials said.

In addition, its London office is in huge debts to various airports and organisations.

Officials say the situation is so bad that the authorities cannot bring one of its aircraft from Singapore after overhauling for lack of money.

With these, the Biman authorities will have to pay a three-month instalment of around Tk 60 crore each for the two new Boeing 777-300 aircraft purchased

recently. The first instalment is due in January.

However, even after the purchase of the two aircraft in October and November this year, Biman's income remains static.

"The situation remains almost the same as no new route was explored and no new service offered," said Wahidul Alam, aviation analyst and editor of travel magazine Bangladesh Monitor.

Sources said the average load factor of the two new aircraft was 55 percent in November and 63 percent in December.

Biman incurred loss on 16 out of 18 routes it now operates. The two profit-making routes are Dhaka-Singapore and Dhaka-Jeddah, sources add.

"If the trend continues, the authorities will be forced to announce a layoff," a top Biman official said wishing anonymity.

Muhammad Zakiul Islam, managing director and chief executive officer of Biman, admitted the current crisis and

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PM, Amartya Sen honoured by Bangla Academy

UNB, Dhaka

Bangla Academy yesterday conferred honorary fellowship on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen.

National Prof AF Salahuddin Ahmed handed over the fellow

SEE PAGE 13 COL 4
PHOTO ON PAGE 5

Man commits suicide after 'killing' wife

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man allegedly killed his wife and then committed suicide at South Kafrul in the capital yesterday.

Ismail Hossain, 43, a retired warrant officer of

SEE PAGE 13 COL 2

KHALEDA'S CTG RALLY BNP yet to get govt nod to its preferred venues

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chittagong

The government is in a fix whether to give permission to BNP to hold a rally on a suitable ground in Chittagong as BNP chief Khaleda Zia arrives in the port city on her scheduled road march on January 9.

BNP leaders said they asked for the Chittagong Outer Stadium and the Polo Ground. They would like any of the two for the rally as the grounds are spacious.

Bangladesh army, the authority of the outer stadium, refused to permit BNP to hold the rally there while Bangladesh Railway, which owns the Polo Ground, is in a spot of bother with what to do with BNP's request.

BNP Dhaka city unit president Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Chittagong Divisional Organising Secretary Golam Akbar Khandokar and Chittagong South district unit president Jafarul Islam Chowdhury MP called on Railways Minister Suranjit Sengupta Thursday at the Rail Bhaban seeking his cooperation to use the Polo Ground.

The BNP leaders said the minister assured them of cooperation. "We wrote a letter to the minister for railways on December 20 seeking permission to use the Polo Ground," said Jafarul, adding that the minister is yet to respond.

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The Daily Star

Integral Energy Limited

ONLINE POLL

Do you support BNP's conditions, such as placing Caretaker Government restoration bill and creating 'congenial' atmosphere in the House, for returning to parliament?

Yes (70.2%)

No (28.5%)

No Comments (1.2%)

TOTAL VOTES: 564

TODAY'S POLL

Do you support the fuel oil price hike by Tk 5 per litre, the second time in less than two months?

PLEASE CAST YOUR VOTE AT
www.thedailystar.net
YOU MAY ALSO VOTE AT
facebook.com/dailystarnews

PRAYER TIMING December 31

Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-27	5-30
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

The Daily Star

Star Camps

LINKING YOUNG MINDS TOGETHER

COMING OUT TOMORROW

LINKING YOUNG MINDS

Check out this week's Star Campus for an array of mind boggling articles on a wide range of issues, like how students across the country plan to bring about positive changes to make a better Bangladesh and participate in interesting workshops. Explore the treasure trove that Milkhet book market offers for the students all around the city. We also have a new page that will consist of thoughts and opinions on our magazine Apart from that you would have humorous tales from schools and universities, plus an exclusive interview with filmmaker Adnan M S Fakir will encourage you to get creative with your favourite student magazine. Catch a good read as Star Campus hits the country tomorrow.

RESOLUTIONS NOT FOR THE NEW YEAR

Blame-game over India's stalled anti-graft law

AGENCIES

India's government faced fierce criticism in the media and from the opposition yesterday after it failed to push through its flagship anti-corruption law in the upper house of parliament.

But the government insists that the opposition BJP was responsible for the bill not being passed.

The govt promised the Lokpal Bill will be brought before the Rajya Sabha during the budget session.

After more than 13 hours of debate, proceedings were finally adjourned shortly before 12:00pm amid scenes of disorder and shouting from lawmakers described as a "midnight farce" by one newspaper.

The opposition BJP said the government had "orchestrated" the chaos as it was not sure it could pass the bill.

But Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pawan Kumar Bansal told reporters that if the BJP wanted the bill to have been passed, "it could have been passed without any problem".

"But they were not willing to co-operate. They would rather see the nation fail than the government succeed."

The Lokpal bill gives an independent ombudsman powers to prosecute politicians and civil servants.

The bill passed the lower house on Tuesday. It needed to be passed in the upper house on Thursday in order to become law.

The bill will now have to be revised and presented again.

The government said it had respected the constitution

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