

Power tariff hike protested

Siege of energy ministry threatened
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports yesterday threatened to lay siege to the energy ministry on September 30, if the government does not withdraw its decision to increase the power tariff.

The committee leaders said the government has already increased the power tariff several times to cover the deficits in the economy caused by the plunderers of the country.

The country's people are bearing the brunt of this corruption through paying higher and higher power tariffs, they said.

The remarks came at a rally organised by the committee in front of Mukti Bhaban in the capital in protest of the government's decision to increase the power tariff once again, said a press release of the committee.

Prof Anu Muhammad, member secretary of the committee, also spoke.



Left-leaning organisations stage a protest rally in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday protesting the price rise of oil and gas, Hall-Mark scam, repression on minority communities and extra-judicial killings.

PHOTO: STAR

SC upholds HC bail to Hizb ut-Tahrir adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday upheld a High Court order granting a six-month bail to Prof Syed Golam Maola, a senior adviser to Hizb ut-Tahrir, in a case filed on charge of organising the banned Islamist outfit to overthrow the government.

Maola's counsel Mansur Habib said now there was no legal bar to his client's release from jail.

Chamber Judge of the Appellate Division of SC Justice MA Wahab Miah passed the order after dismissing the government's September 18 petition seeking stay on the HC order.

Police filed the case against Maola, a former teacher of Dhaka University who allegedly introduced Hizb ut-Tahrir in the country, with Uttara Police Station on March 2, 2010.

Maola was arrested from Dhanmondi on July 8, 2010 in connection with the case.

HALL-MARK LOAN SCAM
Sonali Bank's high officials involved
Says an AGM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several high officials of the Sonali Bank's Hotel Ruposhi Bangla branch are involved in Hall-Mark loan scam, said Shyamal Kanti Nag, an assistant general manager (AGM) of the bank's head office, yesterday.

He, however, denied his involvement in the scam.

Shyamal spoke to the reporters on his way out of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC)'s Segunbagicha office in the afternoon, where he was called for interrogation.

"After we heard about the loan scam through newspapers the head office formed a three-member team including me and sent us to the branch for investigation. We discovered that Hall-Mark misappropriated the bank's money through Inland Bill Purchase (IBP) using forged documents," he said.

"As we probed deeper into the matter we found some high officials of the branch were involved," he added.

However, he declined to reveal the identities of those officials. When asked how many of them are involved in the scam, Shyamal chose to ignore the question.

A Bangladesh Bank (BB) investigation found that the Hotel Ruposhi Bangla branch of the Sonali Bank had lent Hall-Mark Group and five other companies Tk 3,547 crore between 2010 and May this year on forged documents.

Of the amount, Hall-Mark alone borrowed Tk 2,667 crore.

Primary textbooks contain misinformation on Adivasis
Roundtable told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite making corrections, the primary school level textbooks still contain some wrong and misleading information about the culture and lifestyle of the country's indigenous communities, speakers said at a roundtable yesterday.

The inaccurate information is leaving a negative impression on the young minds and may put communal harmony at stake, they said, calling for bringing more modifications in the books, portraying Adivasis positively and including their contributions.

The roundtable "Ethnic identity in textbooks: Our attitude" was organised by Development Initiative for Inclusive People (DIIP) and Zabarang Kalyan Samity in cooperation with Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) and Ministry of CHT Affairs at Jatiya Press Club.

Speaking on the occasion, DIIP Executive Director Chowdhury Ataur Rahman Rana gave some examples of misinformation. The class V textbook Poribesh Porichiti Samaj (Social Science) says Garo women wear blouse and lungi, which is not correct, he

said. "Garo women put on a traditional dress which resembles their identity."

He also said the social science book for class IV described rabbit meat, pork, and crabs as favourite food items for Santal community, which was irrelevant in the children's textbooks and might create a mental distance between people who consumed them and who did not.

Ataur Rahman urged the writers of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) books to be more responsible while writing about indigenous people.

"The textbooks portray mostly negatives things on indigenous people," claimed Shaktipada Chakma, organisational secretary, Bangladesh Adivasi Forum.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of MJF, said, "We've to portray them positively so that our children do not have any negative attitude towards them."

Primary and Mass Education Minister Afsarul Ameen said making correction was a continuous process, and they would bring necessary changes to the textbooks.

NCTB Chairman Mostofa Kamaluddin said the class V textbook would be replaced next year with more positive contents under

Students of 2 univs clash in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students of two private universities yesterday clashed over parking a car and vandalised each other's institutions, halting traffic in the capital's Asad Gate area for half an hour.

Police said the clash ensued around 1:00pm following an altercation between Rector Obaidur Anwar of Mohammadpur Preparatory School and College and two students of People's University of Bangladesh.

While parking his car near Bangladesh University's campus-2 at Asad Avenue, Anwar hit another car of a student of People's University of Bangladesh, said Officer-in-Charge (OC) Azizul Islam of Mohammadpur Police Station.

Seeing this, the student, who could not be identified, along with his fellows locked in an altercation with Anwar and, at one stage, vandalised Anwar's car's windshield, he said.

Hearing about the incident, students of Bangladesh University engaged in a chase-counter chase with the students of People's University of Bangladesh, the OC said.

The students also vandalised the academic offices of each other's institutions by pelting bricks/bats, he added.

During the clash, vehicular movement in the area was interrupted, creating long tailbacks.

Contacted, Deputy Registrar Sohel Ahsan Nipo of Bangladesh University denied the involvement of his institution's students in the incident.

The authorities of People's University of Bangladesh could not be contacted for a comment over the incident.

CARETAKER GOVT
18-party to give view on SC verdict today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will give the views of BNP-led 18-party alliance today on the full text of the Supreme Court verdict on caretaker government system, which was released on Sunday.

She will address a press conference at her Gulshan office in the capital around 4:00pm and will reiterate her demand to restore caretaker government system to oversee the next general election.

"In her address, the chairperson will tell the countrymen that our movement will continue to ensure people's right to vote," a senior leader of the party told The Daily Star.

The opposition's policymakers believe that the full text of the Supreme Court verdict is the reflection of prime minister's desire to hold the next general election under a small cabinet.

Khaleda had already declared that her party would not participate in the election if it is not held under a non party caretaker government, the provision of which was scrapped from the constitution in June last year.

Khaleda's series of district tours starts on Sunday from Dinajpur to drum up public support to compel the government to hold the election following the thirteenth amendment.

Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, party's standing committee member, said they would gradually wage tougher movements and force the government to restore the caretaker non-party government system.

Waste dumped by coconut and banana traders on the road behind Ahsan Manzil, one of Dhaka's architectural heritages, narrows down the road and makes movement on the footpath troublesome. The photo was taken recently.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Int'l conference on Bangladesh to be held at Harvard

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

An international conference on "Achieving Edge for Bangladesh" will be organised at Harvard University in the United States on October 13.

The conference will discuss "Sustainability of Good Governance" and "Management of Strategic Resources" in reference to Padma Bridge and shared water resources, said a press release.

Bangladesh center for Development Studies, a civil society think-tank in North America, will organise the conference where all parties concerned, including top ranking leaders of the ruling Awami League and the opposition BNP, will exchange their views.

The first session will focus on how to sustain good governance and its impact on the development of Bangladesh. Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, a director of UNDP, is expected to deliver the keynote speech at the session.

While newly appointed Home Minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, acting secretary general of BNP Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, AL lawmaker Nazmul Hasan and BNP's information and research secretary Shakil Wahid will speak at the session.

The second session which is expected to be chaired by John Briscoe and Peter Rogers of Harvard University, will discuss the challenges that Bangladesh has faced so far in ensuring effective management of shared water resources.

This session will be addressed by Bangladesh's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN Dr AK Abdul Momen, acting editor of the Daily Amar Desh Mahmudur Rahman and Dr Enamul Haq, said the press release.

Project for family planning through pvt sector launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Emphasising the importance of private sector's involvement in family planning services in the long run, USAID and the health ministry jointly launched a scheme in the capital yesterday.

The project styled "Expanding Access to Long Acting and Permanent Methods of Family Planning through the Private Sector" was launched at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel.

The initiative aims to increase the involvement of the private sector in provision of family planning services with a particular focus on promoting the use of permanent and long acting contraceptive methods across the country, said Richard Greene, mission director of USAID.

Health Minister AFM Ruhul Haque spoke about the importance of permanent contraceptive methods.

Stephen Rahaim, of Strengthening Health Outcomes through the Private Sector (SHOPS) project of USAID, said private health sector and NGOs that provide family planning services in Bangladesh can play a significant role if they are more involved.

PAST CORRUPTION
Govt facing criticism for taking action: PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday told parliament that her government was facing criticism as it had been taking action against corruption, which took place in the past.

"Corruption took place when others were in power in the past. The corruption was kept suppressed. Now all of that is surfacing, and we are taking action," Hasina, also leader of the House, said in her winding up speech of parliament's 14th session.

Citing the Hall-Mark loan scam, Hasina said the managing director of Sonali Bank Humayun Kabir was a leader of Zia Parishad, a pro-BNP organisation.

Similarly, Hall-Mark MD Tanvir Mahmud, who laundered the money, was a man of Hawa Bhaban, popularly known as an alternative power house of Khaleda Zia during the past BNP-led government, she said.

Hasina said the culture of looting bank money and defaulting on loans begun after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman when the military rulers gave patronage to split political parties and form new parties.

The prime minister said the Anti-Corruption Commission was preparing to sue people involved in the Hall-Mark loan scam.

The AL chief also blasted her arch rival BNP chief Khaleda Zia for what she said declining to appear at court despite repeated summonses.

"When court summons her [Khaleda], she feels sick. But later she feels well and makes statements against our government."

"Why does she fear to appear at court if she did not embezzle the money of Zia Orphanage Trust?" Hasina asked. Her repeated refusal to appear at court proves that she has embezzled the money, she said.

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