

CPB, BSD for lowering gas price instead of hiking

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two left parties yesterday urged the authorities concerned to lower the price of natural gas instead of hiking it.

As institutes that extract and transmit natural gas are highly profitable, there is no imminent need to increase gas tariff, they said.

The call came at a sit-in held by the Communist Party of Bangladesh and Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal before the capital's Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission where the fourth and concluding day of a public hearing on the issue was being held.

Since the cost of extracting and distributing natural gas has not increased and the companies have almost realised their initial investment, gas price should be lowered significantly, said BSD leader

Razequzzaman Ratan. CPB General Secretary Abu Zafar urged the government to save the people of the country rather than "imposing the burden of overpriced gas on them."

He added that hiking the price of natural gas would negatively impact people of the lower income bracket as all transport fares and prices of essential commodities would increase.

He also threatened tougher movements if the government does not cancel all sorts of taxes on electricity.

Man arrested with Indian rupees at Dhaka airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs intelligence officials arrested a person and seized around 70 lakh Indian rupees at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka yesterday.

The arrestee Akram arrived at the airport around 12:15pm from Karachi by PK266 flight and could not show his passport.

On information, a team of the officials intercepted him while he was crossing the green channel and recovered the currencies from a suitcase he was carrying, said the officials.

Book fair

FROM PAGE 4

Yesterday, 102 new books arrived. Most of them were fiction and story books followed by poetries. Two new books were launched till 5:30pm.

INTERNATIONAL LITERARY CONFERENCE The International Literary Conference-2015 came to an end yesterday with a Dhaka Declaration, stating such events will be arranged every two years in Dhaka.



A fight between Kamal Pasha-led faction of Gonojagoron Mancha and Bangladesh Chhatra Federation at the capital's Shahbagh last night, the eve of the erstwhile united Mancha's second founding anniversary. Chhatra Federation President Saikat Mallik claimed that six of the organisation's activists, including a female, were injured in an attack led by Kamal himself, when they were rallying at the place, demanding a speedy war crimes trial and quick execution of the verdicts. Kamal's followers allegedly called the Federation activists Jamaat sympathisers. Denying the allegation, Kamal said the Federation activists instead attacked his men, while they were simply chit-chatting on the curb, leaving two of them injured.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Political violence dents car rental in capital

Winter is usually peak season; but in last one month companies under Dhaka Microbus Car Owners Association lost Tk 1 crore

HELEMUL ALAM

Every winter automobile rentals in Dhaka city maintain a busy schedule and see a surge in incomes, with more people going on holiday trips. But the situation is quite the reverse this year.

Since the blockade started indefinitely on January 6, Mohammad Dulal has not rented out his nine-seater Noah microbus once, either for a lack of clients or the fear of violence which is haunting the highways.

"I've already lost Tk 70,000 in income... because the number of picnic and holiday trips has come down drastically," Dulal, a member of the City Cab Association, told The Daily Star.

However, the spending has not stopped.

The association's joint secretary,

Mohammad Salahuddin, said the 60 minibuses and cars the organisation operated would make 30 trips daily whilst the number had declined to only a few now.

However, he said, the association was obligated to pay Tk 4,000 as salary to each of the 60 drivers.

Dulal said he bought the microbus for Tk 12.5 lakh and was paying off the bank loan through a monthly instalment of Tk 26,500. But this is the first time, he could not pay it, the businessman said.

He is only 10-12 instalments away, out of the total 48, from repaying the loan in full.

Meher Hossain Khan, general secretary of Dhaka Microbus Car Owners Association, said the 100 vehicles operating under the organisation had suffered a loss of Tk 1 crore in the last one month.

He told The Daily Star that an estimated 10,000 minibuses and cars operated under 150 associations in the capital.

Though the accumulated loss, if calculated, would be gargantuan, there were no collated figures.

Meanwhile, the drivers are bearing the brunt of the BNP-led blockade. Their incomes have dropped down to next to zero.

"I would get Tk 600 to Tk 800 for every trip. The income is almost gone," said Monir Uddin, a microbus driver, who could not pay off Tk 4,500 as his house rent and has already borrowed Tk 5,000 to support his three-member family.

An indignant Monir said, "Why is the government not going tough on arsonists? If it can't, it should take alternative measures."

100 most influential British-Bangladeshis get place in new book

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Outstanding success of many Bangladeshis deserves celebration despite the fact that the country still struggles in some areas, said some influential British Bangladeshis at a publication ceremony in the capital Tuesday.

Some inspiring figures, who have been featured in this year's list of British Bangladeshi Power and Inspiration (BBPI), include a full time judge Khatun Sapnara, the first ever winner of the category "the first person of British Bangladeshi origin in a senior judicial position"; renowned oncologist Prof Nazneen Rahman; Dr Irene Zubaida Khan, chancellor of the University of Salford; Baroness Pola Uddin; diplomat Anwar Chudhury; executive mayor of London Lutfur Rahman; lawmaker Rushanara Ali; author Tahmima Anam and captain Naveen Rahman of British Army.

BBPI is an initiative to celebrate the outstanding contribution of the British Bangladeshi community in various professional fields of the British society like business entrepreneurship, politics, administration, legal and judicial service, culture, sport and politics.

BBPI launched the fourth annual list of 100 most powerful and influential persons of Bangladeshi origin in the UK.

Bangladeshi nationals who are aspiring for successes can be inspired by the achievements of the British Bangladeshi community, said BBPI's founder Abdal Ullah, adding that they would also organise similar celebration for such Bangladeshis for their outstanding leadership and achievements.

Acting British High Commissioner in Bangladesh Mark Clayton and Syed Nahas Pasha, a member of the adjudicators' panel for listing the persons, also spoke at the ceremony.

GATCO GRAFT CASE

Hearing on Khaleda's challenge Feb 9

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday fixed February 9 for final hearing on two writ petitions challenging the legality of Gatco graft case against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

The case was filed against the BNP chief, her son Arafat Rahman Koko, Jamaat-e-Islami leader Motiur Rahman Nizami, and 21 others with Tejgaon police in 2007 on charges of corruption in awarding Global Agro Trade (Pvt) Co Ltd (Gatco) a contract for container management at inland container depots in Dhaka and Chittagong.

On September 30, 2007 the HC granted Khaleda bail and issued a rule upon the government and ACC asking to explain why the charges under the Emergency Power Rules should not be declared illegal.

On July 15, 2008 it stayed the proceedings and issued another rule on the same asking to explain why the proceedings should not be quashed.

Road crashes kill five

CITY DESK

Five people were killed in road accidents in four districts yesterday.

In Naogaon, Jahanara Begum, 42, of Chawktuar village died when a three-wheeler hit her in Jalchchota area of Manda upazila.

In Dinajpur, two people died when a truck hit a bicycle they were riding on Dinajpur-Bogra highway in front of Birampur College in Birampur upazila.

The deceased were Nilu Rahman, 48, and his nephew Anwarul Hossain 35, of Dhelupara village.

In Bogra town, Ruhul Amin, 40, of Pachchimpalsha area died when a truck ran him over while he was crossing Rangpur-Dhaka highway in Tinmatha area.

Meanwhile in Jamalpur, Afaj Ali, 45, of Raghunathpur village died when a truck hit him as the driver lost control over the vehicle on Jamalpur-Tangail road in Adarsha-Battola area of Jamalpur Sadar.

Strawberry cultivation popular in Narsingdi

BSS, Narsingdi

After Rajshahi region, commercial farming of strawberry is now earning popularity in Narsingdi.

At present, a good number of educated unemployed youths of the district have engaged themselves in strawberry farming.

Nazrul Islam, who started strawberry cultivation at Shallaad union in Belabo upazila two and a half years ago, said at first he planted 500 strawberry plants on 20 decimals of land in October 2012. The trees started getting fruits within three months which he began plucking in January.

Initially he plucked 8 to 10 kilograms of strawberries per day from his orchard and sold every kilogram for Tk 400 at Bhairab

fruit market.

In the last two years, he expanded his orchard and got about 20 kilograms of strawberries per day, he said.

This year, Nazrul has already earned Tk 5 lakh by selling the juicy fruits and hopes to earn even more during the remaining days of the season till April. He is also growing strawberry saplings.

Suvash Chandra Gayan, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension, said cultivation of strawberry is more profitable as the juicy fruit has a great demand in local markets.

The profitable cultivation has drawn and employed many educated youths of the district, he added.



Schoolchildren go over a rickety bridge through an unhealthy environment with garbage piled up underneath in Atibazar of Lalbagh in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH



A man draws an illegal electricity connection to irrigate Boro fields at Elenga in Tangail recently. The locals accuse the authorities concerned of allowing the malpractice in exchange for bribes and making up bills and forcing the registered subscribers to pay those. During this period every year, illegal power lines get ubiquitous, particularly in places needing irrigation.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

Forkan killed man before raping

FROM PAGE 4

entered my uncle's room. About 10 minutes later, I saw them bringing out my uncle and cousin," he said.

"My uncle told Akabbor and Forkan, 'Do not take my daughter or I will tell Major'. Forkan immediately shot my uncle with his rifle and my uncle fell down on the ground. Seeing this, my cousin bent down over the body.

"Then Forkan hit my cousin on the waist. Grabbing her hair, Forkan handed her over to the other Razakars to take her to the gunboat," the witness said.

"We thought she was perhaps killed and thrown in the (Payra) river," Selim said, adding that his distressed aunt had gone unconscious for two days.

"Three days later at dawn, we awoke at neighbours' screams. They said someone left your daughter at the bank," he said.

Selim said he had watched from the

riverbank as Forkan along with other Razakars and the Pakistani army came to their village around 1:30pm on August 22, looted goods from shops and indiscriminately fired shots, killing two people.

Before leaving the village that evening, they killed another person, he said.

The tribunal adjourned proceedings until today as the defence sought time for preparation to cross-examine the witness.

The 63-year-old denies the five charges.

TRIBUNAL-1

Meanwhile, the 14th prosecution witness, Md Qayum, yesterday testified over the killing of his father Abdur Rashid at Baligati village of Kishoreganj on December 11, 1971 by fugitive war crimes accused Syed Hasan Ali, saying he had heard it from his uncle and others.

Proceedings were adjourned until today. Hasan faces six charges for crimes against humanity and genocide.

Horror seen in movies

FROM PAGE 3

in critical condition with inhalation injuries. Jhantu had 30 percent burns all over his body while Zillur and Anwar suffered 12 and 9 percent burns respectively in their faces and hands.

Anwar's mother Rehana Akhter was wailing by the side of the family's sole breadwinner fearful of the fate of those dependent on him. "We are poor people. We do not understand politics. Why did they attack my son? Now who will look after my family?"

Find

FROM PAGE 3

terrorism, it was community leaders not playing their proper roles.

So emphasis must be put on the community-based approach in eradicating the global concern, they said.

Senior civil and military officials including current and former ambassadors, members of the academia, representatives of think-tanks, scholars, policymakers and media personalities participated in the open discussion.

BIISS Director General Maj Gen AKM Abdur Rahman, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute Vice President Humayun Kabir, and Institute of Conflict, Law and Development Studies Executive Director Maj Gen (ret'd) Abdur Rashid also spoke with BIISS Board of Governors Chairman Munshi Faiz Ahmad in the chair.