

Latest gas

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The HC, however, condoned the tariff already collected from consumers in June and July. The government would not have to return the money already collected in the two months, said Mohammad Saiful Alam, lawyer for Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) which filed a writ petition with the court in this regard.

Delivering the verdict on the writ, the HC termed the June-1 hike illegal.

Saiful said the gas prices for industries and other uses would remain the same.

Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission has been asked to issue a notice circulating the HC directives, the lawyer said.

Citing the HC judgment, Saiful said the public notice issued by the BERC on February 23 increasing gas price in two phases has been declared illegal. The BERC cannot enhance gas price twice in a fiscal year under the relevant law.

The lawyer also said details of the HC observations would be known once its full verdict was released.

The bench of Justice Zinat Ara and Justice Kazi Md Ejazul Haque Akondo came up with the verdict after holding the final hearing on the petition challenging the BERC decision.

The BERC on February 23 raised gas prices by 22.7 percent and decided to implement the hike in two phases.

Following the writ, the HC on February 28 stayed for six months the BERC's decision and issued a rule asking the authorities concerned to explain as to why the decision should not be declared illegal.

On May 30, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court stayed the HC order that stayed the decision of increasing the gas price from June 1.

The apex court on June 5 extended its May 30 order and asked the HC to hear and dispose of the petition by July 31.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam represented BERC, Deputy Attorney General Motaher Hossain Sazu argued for Titas gas while lawyers Subrata Chowdhury and Mohammad Saiful Islam appeared for the writ petitioner.

Disputes need

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an example for the world.

Hasina also mentioned resolving maritime disputes with Myanmar in the same way. "We've also solved insurgency problem in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and brought back 62,000 refugees from India by signing the peace treaty."

Terming poverty the main enemy of this region, she emphasised the need for all countries of the region working together to root out poverty.

The prime minister elaborated on her government's achievements in various sectors that took place in the last eight and a half years. "After assuming office, we've set goals to ensure food security, education and healthcare for people."

She also mentioned that the government implemented many programmes in these sectors and people are now getting the benefits.

The prime minister said the past BNP-Jamaat government stopped many welfare-oriented programmes like community clinics and 'Ekti Bari Ekti Khamar Project' out of political vengeance.

Hasina also referred to the August 21 grenade attack on her in 2004 and said the militants carried out synchronised bomb blasts in 500 places in 63 districts out of 64 in 2005.

While talking about the menace of terrorism, she said the arms sellers are ultimately benefitting from it.

Highly lauding the development activities in Bangladesh, the Pakistani high commissioner said Bangladesh has now totally changed with rapid development.

Rafiuzzaman Siddiqui said the Pakistani people highly appreciated the way Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been containing terrorism and militancy.

Referring to the terrorist attack at Holey Artisan Cafe in the city last year, the Pakistan envoy said such an incident did not recur in Bangladesh since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been dealing with terrorism and militancy with an iron fist.

Rafiuzzaman said both Bangladesh and Pakistan share many commonalities and he would continue to work for the improvement of the relations between the two countries.

PM's Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, PMO Senior Secretary Suraiya Begum and PM's Military Secretary Major General Mia Mohammad Zainul Abedin were present during the meeting.

Ex-MP's son

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the criminals opened fire on him and left the scene.

Hearing his cry for help, locals rushed there and took Faisal to Kaliganj Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead, he said.

EC begins talks

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guest would get only two minutes to present their views.

Former caretaker adviser M Hafizuddin Ahmed said it would be tough to make the commission understand the points clearly within two minutes.

"I will emphasise that the commission has to create a level playing field before the election; otherwise the election will not be meaningful," he said, adding that the EC should introduce no-vote.

Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB), said, "I would like to stress the need of unqualified courage and capacity of commission leadership to fully comply and act in accordance with each and every provision of the RPO without fear or favour."

"They have to realise that they have nothing to gain except the trust of the people, and it is practically in their own hands provided that they can resist any pressures from any quarters - direct or indirect. I would also be particularly interested to see that the commission gives top priority to enforcement and monitoring of compliance of provisions specific to campaign finance," he said.

Renowned educationist Syed Manzoorul Islam said, "I would not join the talks for two reasons -- first, I

have scheduled class at that time and second, the commission has invited 60 people and even if 40 people turned up, it would not be an organised conversation."

Local government expert Tofail Ahmed said it is not possible for EC alone to hold a free and fair election and that is why all the stakeholders must behave responsibly.

Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah, chairman of Janipop, said, "Personally I think two issues -- comprehensive violence tackling mechanism and electoral dispute resolution -- should be discussed."

Former caretaker adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury said she cannot understand if the meeting would be fruitful as the issue is huge but the discussion timeframe is very limited.

Educationist Dr Tareque Shamsur Rahman said the main point is the EC has to take steps to ensure a level playing field for all political parties.

Election Commissioner Kabita Khanam said, "We have decided to continue the meeting even after lunch, if required. So, there is no time barrier."

Earlier, ATM Shamsul Huda-led commission held talks with the civil society representatives and political parties.

Huda's successor Rakib Uddin-led commission also held talks with the civil society representatives, but BNP and its alliance partners refused to join in.

AL to serve

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as per his wish and 14 more were on a list he prepared, the daily quoted him as saying.

Following huge criticism, Enamur withdrew his statement and apologised for his "unexpected, indecent and condemnable" speech. The lawmaker also published a newspaper ad to this end.

About BNP chairperson's London trip, the AL spokesperson Quader said they were looking into the purpose of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's London tour to determine whether she was trying to hatch a conspiracy there.

The UK unit of Awami League is keeping its eyes on every movement of Khaleda Zia in London. Everything -- such as where Khaleda Zia is going,

with whom she is holding meetings and maintaining communications have been put under the scanner," he said.

The meeting of AL secretaries also decided to increase fees for party office bearers with retrospective effect from November last year, said sources.

AL presidium members would now have to pay Tk 5,000 a year instead of Tk 3,000. The party president and general secretary would pay the same as presidium members.

Secretarial member would pay Tk 4,000 instead of Tk 2,000 and central committee member would pay Tk 3,000 in place of Tk 1,000.

National Executive Committee members used to pay Tk 200 before but now they would pay Tk 500.

Pak parliament

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by AFP

It said the assembly would meet at 3:00 pm tomorrow to elect a prime minister.

The younger Sharif -- who is chief minister of the country's most populous province of Punjab -- has so far been unscathed by the corruption allegations engulfing his brother's family.

On Saturday the Election Commission said fresh elections would be held in Nawaz Sharif's former constituency, in the family's power base in Punjab, in a process that could take up to 45 days.

Abbas is set to be rubber-stamped as placeholder in the parliamentary vote. The opposition could also field a candidate but has little chance of securing enough votes in the 342-seat house.

Meanwhile, former prime minister vacated the Prime Minister's House yesterday and departed for Murree along with members of the Sharif family.

Before he departed for Murree, Nawaz met with members of the staff at the PM's House.

Former Finance Minister Ishaq Dar also met with the PM's staff before he left for Murree with the Sharif family, reported Dawn Online.

Pakistan's main opposition leader

Imran Khan yesterday held a rally celebrating Sharif's ousting in the capital Islamabad.

With corruption allegations engulfing the powerful Sharif family -- a dominant force in the country's politics for the last three decades -- cricket-turn-politician Khan is hoping to win support for his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party.

The grassroots PTI has long campaigned on an anti-corruption platform and expects thousands to come out for what is dubbed a "Thanksgiving Rally".

"It wasn't a political game play, it was the nation's battle against the corrupt mafia. Join Pakistan as it celebrates #YahumETashakur (Thanksgiving) today," PTI tweeted on its official handle.

However, Khan himself faces graft allegations in court linked to the non-disclosure of assets and offshore companies -- similar charges that brought down Sharif.

The case, brought by a member of Sharif's PML-N party, seeks to have Khan disqualified on the same contentious clause in the constitution that ousted Sharif -- the requirement that Pakistani politicians be honest.

Khan's lawyers have denied all charges and say his wealth stems from his lucrative cricketing career.

Conviction rate

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Law and Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies and in Police Staff College in Mirpur and a meet the press event at the Jatiya Press Club.

National Human Rights Commission expressed solidarity with the initiative.

According to this year's US State Department report, which placed Bangladesh on the "tier 2 watch list", the government investigated 122 sex and 168 labour trafficking cases last year, a decrease from 181 sex and 265 labour trafficking cases a year ago.

"Tier 2 watch list" is a step down from tier 2 where the country saw itself for five years since 2012.

Praising the initiative for upholding migrant workers' rights, NHRC Chairman Kazi Reazul Hoque said at the press club event that migrant workers are the lifeline in terms of boosting the country's foreign reserves through earning remittance in exchange for their labour.

However, not a single case has been disposed of.

According to the "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2016" prepared by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Bangladesh reported just 10 to 15 convictions a year in human trafficking cases. This was markedly below the conviction rate (50 to 80) in neighbouring Nepal.

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the criminals opened fire on him and left the scene.

Hearing his cry for help, locals rushed there and took Faisal to Kaliganj Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead, he said.

NEWS

Bogra rape sparks outcry, protests

FROM PAGE 1
sister Marzia Hasan Rumki, who is a woman councillor.

Tufan, convenor of Bogra town unit of the ruling Awami League's worker front, on July 17 abducted the female student from her home and raped her and then asked his party cadres and the woman councillor to make sure everything was hushed up.

They picked up the student and her mother on Friday, tortured them for four hours and then shaved their heads.

Police arrested Rumki and her mother Rumi at a house in Pabna town around 7:30pm yesterday, said Sonatan Chakrabarty, additional superintendent of police.

Tufan's wife Asa and his two associates -- Munna and Zitu -- were arrested at Hemayetpur of Savar in Dhaka around 11:45pm when they were going to Dhaka from Pabna in a microbus, Arifur Rahman, an additional SP of Bogra told The Daily Star.

Arifur said Jamirul Rahman Runu, father-in-law of Tufan, was arrested at his Bogra home around 10:30pm yesterday.

Additional SP Sonatan told this newspaper that Tufan was an alleged drug trader and an accused in a case over the murder of a Jubo Dal activist in Bogra. The officer, however, could not say about the status of those cases.

Bogra district administration formed a three-member probe committee led by Additional District

Magistrate Abdus Samad, said Noor-e-Alam Siddique, deputy commissioner of Bogra.

Yesterday, people of all walks of life under the banner of Sachetan Nagorik Samaj, a citizen platform, formed a human chain at Saatmatha in the town and strongly condemned the incident.

Tying eyes with black cloths, they demanded exemplary punishment to the culprits.

During the protest, Mustafizur Rahman, president of Bogra district unit of Shushashoner Jonno Nagarik, said arresting Tufan was not enough; he had to be tried and punished.

Tawfique Hasan, general secretary of Bangladesh Gram Theatre, demanded the arrest of the "godfathers" who patronised Tufan.

Aminul Farid, general secretary of Bogra district unit of Communist Party of Bangladesh, said Tufan had not become a criminal overnight. He was arrested with Yaba and Phensidyle several times but got released using his political influence.

Different socio-cultural and political organisations in the capital also expressed deep shock and demanded the government ensure safety and treatment of the victim and her mother.

The incident also triggered fury in social media as the photos of the shaved heads of the mother and daughter were shared online.

The district Sramik League yesterday

suspended Tufan and the AL decided to investigate the matter as leaders think the rape and torture of the girl had tarnished the party's image.

"This is a heinous act and we are ashamed," said Rafiqul Islam, president of Bogra Sramik League.

In a statement, the organisation said there was no room for any criminals in Sramik League and demanded exemplary punishment of the culprits.

The AL has assigned its Joint Secretary Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Organising Secretary Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury to investigate the incident. The step was taken from a meeting at the party president's Dhanmondi office with its General Secretary Obaidul Quader in the chair.

The victim, who passed Secondary School Certificate exam this year and was seeking college admission, and her mother were admitted to Bogra Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital on Friday.

"There are seven to eight injury marks on the victim's body. She might have been struck with a blunt object like an iron rod or a stick. Her body bears deep scars but she is now out of danger," said Abdul Mottaleb, head of surgery department at the hospital.

The Bogra DC visited the victim in the hospital yesterday morning and assured her family of both medical and legal assistance. He said the administration would bear the treatment and education costs of the girl.

Australia thwarts plane attack plot

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"In recent days, law enforcement has become aware of information that suggested some people in Sydney were planning to commit a terrorist attack using an IED (improvised explosive device)," he told reporters.

He added that several items "of great interest to police" had been seized in the raids but police did not yet have a great deal of information on the specific attack, the location,

date or time. He said the investigation was expected to be "very long and protracted".

"However, we're investigating information indicating the aviation industry was potentially a target of that attack."

Colvin would not provide further details, but the Australian Broadcasting Corporation said police found items that could be used to make a homemade bomb

in one of the raided homes Saturday.

Authorities believed they planned to smuggle the device onto a plane to blow it up, the ABC added.

AIRPORT SECURITY BOOST

Four men were arrested Saturday after armed police stormed homes in at least four neighbourhoods, though