

Every house to get power

Says PM with promise to produce electricity from different sources

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday again reiterated her government's commitment to provide electricity to every house by producing electricity from different sources.

"We'll provide electricity connection to each house of the country, enabling our children across the country to read and learn through modern education. Every area of the country will be developed... we believe in balanced development," she said.

The PM made the comment while inaugurating the 100 percent electricity supply programme and four power plants through a videoconference from the Gono Bhaban.

The upazilas which have already been brought under 100 percent electricity coverage are Faridpur Sadar, Rajoir, Naogaon Sadar, Kamarkhand, Akhaura, Brahmanbaria Sadar, Shalikka, Meherpur Sadar, Madon and Belabo.

The new power plants inaugurated by the PM are Shikalbaha 225MW plant, Chapainawabganj 100MW plant, Salla 400KW solar plant and Sarishabari 3MW solar plant.

Hasina said increasing power production was essential, but this was not only for the urban people.

"Our target is rural areas where grassroots people live; we want to light up their houses, provide healthcare, education and improve their lifestyle."

Recalling the deplorable condition of power production in 1996, Hasina said when the Awami League took office, there was only 1,600MW of power production. "Only a few people enjoyed the facility of electricity while the entire rural areas were in darkness."

She said the then AL government formulated a law and invited the private sector to power generation, aiming to meet the power demand and waived all taxes on the import of generators. "With our time-befitting steps, we have been able to improve the power generation from 1,600MW to 4,300MW."

But she regretted that when the AL came to power again in 2009, she saw that the power generation was reduced to 3,200MW.

The PM mentioned that the government in 2009 set a target to go for producing power quickly as part of a government plan to improve the national grid and other supply lines.

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BB HEIST

Muhith wants to 'wipe out' Manila bank

REUTERS, Dhaka

Finance Minister AMA Muhith said on Saturday he wanted to "wipe out" a Philippines bank that was used to channel \$81 million stolen from the Bangladeshi central bank's account with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York last year.

He was responding to questions from reporters about a Reuters story on Friday that said Bangladesh Bank had asked the New York Fed to join a lawsuit it was considering filing against Manila-based Rizal Commercial Banking Corp (RCBC) seeking damages.

"The Bangladesh Bank has taken a decision [on filing a suit]. They will let me know. We haven't so far taken any steps as the Philippines government was taking care of it [investigating the heist]," Muhith said.

"But it seems Rizal bank has been playing delinquent. We want to wipe out Rizal bank from the world."

Muhith did not elaborate. He did not respond to requests seeking comment.

Unidentified hackers stole the money using fraudulent orders on the SWIFT payments system. The money was sent to accounts at RCBC and then disappeared into the casino industry in the Philippines.

Nearly two years later, there is no word on who was responsible and Bangladesh Bank has been able to retrieve only about \$15 million, mostly from a Manila junket operator.

The Philippine central bank fined RCBC a record one billion pesos (\$20 million) last year for its failure to prevent the movement of the stolen money through it.

RCBC has said it would not pay any compensation to Bangladesh Bank and that Dhaka bank bore responsibility for the theft since it was negligent.

RCBC did not immediately respond to a request seeking comment yesterday about Muhith's comments.



Adiba Islam, the seven-year-old daughter of Parvez Hossain who went missing four years ago, stuns the participants at the Jatiya Press Club into silence by requesting she be sent to him. Last year, Adiba requested for her father to be returned to her.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Bring them back safely

FROM PAGE 1 who remain traceless since 2013 demanded PM's intervention for their safe return.

They called upon the government to set up an independent investigation commission to find out the fate of their loved ones and to punish those involved in their enforced disappearance.

Ferdousi Rahman, sister of BNP leader Sajedul Islam Sumon, said, "In the last four years, I made this appeal at least 20 times. He [Sumon] was picked up in front of many people. Whenever we go to law enforcers for any update, they just tell us that they are looking into it."

She then broke down, and added, "Please at least show us his body, or his grave, so we can at least pray for him there."

Sumon, general secretary of BNP's ward-38 unit in the capital, and seven others were allegedly picked up by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) between 8:00pm of December 4 and 2:00pm of December 5 in 2013 from the city's

Bashundhara and Shahinbagh areas. The Rab dismissed the claim.

Having lost the lone breadwinner of the family four years ago, Baby Akter is struggling to survive with their eight-year-old son.

A group of plainclothes men claiming to be from the administration picked up her husband Tarikul Islam alias Tara Mia, a JCD leader, from their Mirpur house on August 13, 2012.

The abduction forced Baby's elderly father, Bazlur Rahman, to open a shop to support the family.

Like these victims, at least 519 people became victims of enforced disappearance or abduction between 2010 and July 2017 in the country. At least 329 of them remain traceless. Of the rest, some returned home, some were later shown arrested while the bodies of some others were later found, according to Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK).

Since August 22 this year, as many as 12 people, including former ambassador to Vietnam Maroof Zaman, North South University teacher Mubashar Hasan and journalist Utpal Das, sim-

ply vanished, in telltale signs of enforced disappearance.

Of the 12, three returned home while three others were shown arrested by the police.

The fate of the six others, including the ex-diplomat, the NSU teacher and the journalist, is not clear yet.

Families and rights bodies pointed the finger at law enforcers for such disappearance, although the latter deny the claim.

Utpal's colleagues yesterday formed a human chain in front of Dhaka Reporters Unity to express their resentment.

Speaking at the Jatiya Press Club programme, Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, a civil activist and founder of the Gonoshasthaya Kendra, said incidents of enforced disappearance, murder and extra-judicial killing continued because the authorities had no interest to stop them.

Such incidents cannot take place without some kind of involvement of the authorities, he said, adding that other countries may also have a hand.

Citing family members, Nagorik Oikya Convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna said police did not even receive complaints when victims' families went to police stations.

Even if police register the cases under public pressure, they hardly investigate those, he said.

Dhaka University Prof CR Abrar, also president of rights body Odhikar, "Children want to know when their fathers will return, wives want to know about their husbands and parents want to know if they can see their sons for a last time before their death."

Rights Activists Nur Khan Liton said incidents of enforced disappearance, killing in the name of crossfire and the culture of impunity created a horrifying situation in society where people are living in fear and with uncertainty.

On November 23, the PM in parliament said cases of forced disappearance were being recorded in developed countries too, not just in Bangladesh.

This statement, Nur Khan said, is an indirect justification of those incidents.

228 charged with Nasirnagar attack

FROM PAGE 1 vandalised on October 30 last year. Over 1,000 unnamed persons were accused in the case.

Some of the men named in the charge sheet include AL leader and former UP chairman Abul Hashem, sacked UP chairman Dewan Atikur Rahman Ankhil, former joint secretary of Nasirnagar upazila AL Sheikh Md Abdul Ahad, local AL leaders Faruq Mia and Suruj Ali, BNP leaders Abdul Hannan, Jamal, Amirul Hossain Chakdar, mosque imam Mukhlesur Rahman and president of a religious organisation Zakir

Hossain. Court Inspector Mahbubur Rahman said the charge sheet would be placed before the court today.

Most of the suspects are from Srighar, Chapartola, Nurpur, Nasirnagar, Haripur, Horinber, Shankardaha, Ashurail, Buriswar, Atukora, Jethagram, Datmandal and Kunda villages. Nasirnagar police officials said they sent the charge sheet to the police headquarters for its approval on December 3.

Inspector Shawkat Hossain, who investigated the case, also charged five children and recommended their trial be held at a juvenile court.

THE MAYHEM On October 30 last year, religious zealots attacked at least 15 temples in Nasirnagar and vandalised idols.

They also vandalised and looted about 100 Hindu homes and beat up over 100 Hindu locals over what was claimed a Facebook post from the account of Rasraj Das, 27, a resident of Haripur union, about 13km from the place of the attack.

Six more Hindu houses were set afire in the area a few days later. The house of Nasirnagar UP Vice-

Chairman Anjan Deb was also attacked.

After the attacks, as many as eight cases were filed accusing some 2,000 people.

So far, 124 suspects, including prime suspect Dewan Atiqur Rahman Ankhil, have been arrested and produced before the court. All of them are now on bail.

Meanwhile, AL Lawmaker Obaidul Muktaadir Chowdhury harshly criticised The Daily Star for running a report on the attacks while speaking at Brahmanbaria Press Club yesterday.

Protests flare over US move

FROM PAGE 16 Arab League foreign ministers on Saturday called on the United States to rescind the move.

Tens of thousands have also protested in Muslim and Arab countries, including Jordan, Turkey, Pakistan and Malaysia.

Further protests were held in Lebanon, Indonesia, Egypt, Morocco and the Palestinian territories yesterday.

Lebanese security forces fired tear gas and water cannons at several hundred demonstrators near the US embassy.

Protesters waving Palestinian and Lebanese flags, and sporting black-and-white checked keffiyeh scarves, chanted slogans against Trump, an AFP correspondent at the protest said.

Several people were injured by rocks, tear gas, and rubber bullets, the correspondent said.

In Jakarta, some 5,000 Indonesians protested in solidarity with the Palestinians, gathering outside the US embassy in the world's most-populous Muslim country.

In Cairo, students and professors demonstrated at the prestigious Al-Azhar University, a university spokesman said, with pictures on social media showing several hun-

dred protesters. Dozens of students protested at two other Cairo universities.

A protest and clashes also broke out in Al-Arroub refugee camp in the south of the occupied West Bank, leaving one Palestinian wounded from rubber bullets, the Palestinian health ministry said.

Separately, the Israeli military said it destroyed a Hamas tunnel stretching from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory -- an incident unrelated to the recent unrest, but which threatened to further increase tensions. Such tunnels have been used in the past to carry out attacks.

Trump's declaration has been followed by near universal condemnation and diplomatic fallout, with warnings it risks setting off a new round of violence in the turbulent Middle East.

Trump's decision upended decades of US diplomacy and broke with international consensus.

It drew criticism from every other UN Security Council member at an emergency meeting on Friday.

US Vice President Mike Pence is due to visit the region later this month, but Palestinian officials say president Mahmud Abbas will refuse to meet him.

Egypt's Coptic Pope Tawadros II cancelled a meeting with Pence as

well, saying Trump's announcement had failed to take into account the "feelings of millions" of Arabs.

Netanyahu's trip to Europe was long planned, but the recent crisis is almost sure to be discussed.

Both Macron and EU diplomatic chief Federica Mogherini have criticised Trump's decision, and there have been ongoing tensions between Netanyahu and European Union officials over Israeli settlement building in the West Bank.

Clashes in the West Bank and along the fence dividing the Gaza Strip from Israel have seen Palestinians burning tyres while hurling stones and firebombs at Israeli troops, who responded with tear gas, rubber bullets and live rounds.

Retaliation Israeli air strikes on the Gaza Strip in response to rockets killed two Hamas militants on Saturday while two others died near the border fence the day before.

Palestinian health officials say more than 1,100 people were wounded from tear gas, rubber bullets, live fire and other means from Thursday to Saturday.

There have been fears of a much larger escalation of violence after Hamas leader Ismail Haniya called for a new Palestinian intifada, or

uprising.

In Rome, Pope Francis yesterday called for "wisdom and prudence", asking world leaders "to avert a new spiral of violence".

Trump said his defiant move -- making good on a 2016 presidential campaign pledge -- marked the start of a "new approach" to solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

But Washington has found itself increasingly isolated on the global stage.

Five European countries on the Security Council insisted the new US policy was inconsistent with past resolutions, including one declaring east Jerusalem to be Israeli-occupied.

The UN meeting was largely symbolic as no vote on a resolution was planned because the US wields veto power.

The decision is likely to impact domestic Palestinian politics, particularly between Abbas's Fatah and the Islamist Hamas, now at a key stage in a fragile reconciliation process after a decade of bitter enmity.

Hamas, which violently seized Gaza from Fatah in 2007, was due to formally hand back power yesterday. Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhum said Saturday the group "reiterated its commitment to all that has been signed and agreed upon and the completion of the handover".

Bounty on 5 for double murder in Moulvibazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Moulvibazar police has announced a Tk 50,000 bounty on each of the five suspects in the murder of two students at Moulvibazar Government High School Thursday evening.

The law enforcers announced the bounty after primarily identifying the suspects.

Meanwhile, police detained two more youths yesterday afternoon in connection with the murder.

Mohammad Shahjalal, superintendent of Moulvibazar police, said the five suspects were Sony, Mahdi, Tushar, Soumik, and Protik.

Two students -- Shahbab Rahman, 23, and Mahi Ahmed, 18 -- died from injuries at Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital Thursday evening around half an hour after they were stabbed allegedly by members of their rival Bangladesh Chhatra League group.

Shahbab was a student of Moulvibazar Government College and Mahi an SSC examinee of the high school.

The BCL has, however, claimed that the two boys were not their members or activists.

Police in two drives yesterday afternoon detained Al Jamil, 18, of Fatehpur village under Moulvibazar Sadar upazila, and Kanak Das, 18, of Paboi village of Kulaura upazila in connection with their alleged involvement in the murder, said Sohail Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Moulvibazar Sadar Police Station.

Jamil was detained in Sherpur area of the Sadar upazila and Kanak in Kulaura upazila, the OC added.

On Friday, police detained Rubel Ahmed, 22, in Moulvibazar town in connection with the murder.

Shahbab's mother Selina Chowdhury last night filed a case against 12 people in connection with the double murder, OC Sohail said.

EC to decide on DNCC by-polls in a few days

BNP to select mayor candidate after EC announces polls schedule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission will decide within a day or two when the by-polls to the mayoral post of Dhaka North City Corporation will be held, acting secretary of the commission Helaluddin Ahmed said yesterday.

The commission will have a meeting within a day or two and make the decision on the by-election, he told reporters at Nirbachon Bhaban.

He thinks there is no legal complexity over holding of the by-polls, including the new 18 wards in the DNCC area, as the IGRD and cooperatives ministry had earlier asked the EC to hold elections to councillor posts in the wards.

In the meeting, the EC will also examine the legal aspects of the by-polls held with the 18 wards, he said.

The DNCC mayoral post became vacant following the death of mayor Annisul Huq. According to the Local Government (City Corporation) law, the by-polls has to be held within 90 days of the post becoming vacant.

On April 28, 2015, the DNCC election was held and Awami League candidate Annisul won by a large margin. He died on November 30 at a hospital in London where he was undergoing treatment.

Meanwhile, the BNP has decided to finalise its DNCC mayor candidate after the announcement of polls schedule for the city corporation.

A BNP standing committee member, wishing not to be named, said a party delegation, led by a standing committee member, would join the Rangpur City Corporation polls campaign.

The decisions were made at the party's standing committee meeting with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in the chair at her Gulshan office last night.

Another senior BNP leader said Khaleda told her party colleagues that the proceedings of cases filed against her were expedited just to keep the BNP under pressure.

"Don't be worried. Nothing will happen," the BNP leader said, quoting Khaleda as saying.