BANGABANDHU KILLING

was involved,

PM says Zia

no doubt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

LPG, CNG TRADERS

## They want to 'approve' new entrants

Asks BERC to make membership of their association mandatory for new licences

LP gas importers, distributors and CNG filling stations owners want a new clause in BERC License Regulations requiring their certificates for any new entries in this sector.

In a written proposal to the Bangladesh Regulatory Energy Commission (BERC), CNG Filling Station and Conversion Workshop Associations yesterday Owners' requested to include membership certificates of the association among other documents required to be a new

BERC organised a public hearing at their head office, after the proposal was placed before them, to make necessary reforms in it's Licence Regulations 2003, where the owners of different CNG and LP gas companies demanded the new clause.

They attached a commerce ministry gazette dated June 22, 2017, saying that all authorised CNG stations must get the membership of the CNG Filling Station and Conversion Workshop Owners' Association.

After their proposal, Zakaria Jalal, executive director of Basundhara LPG, demanded a similar clause for LPG

In the liquified petroleum gas sector, LPG Operators' Association of Bangladesh (LOAB) is controlling the market along with new entries, claimed the concerns. They said BERC set prices for LPG but couldn't implement them for this reason.

Experts, however, said if the BERC caves in to these demands, it will legalise the "syndicate" that currently controls the sector.

"This kind of proposal and practice are conflicting with the BERC's act," said Prof Shamsul Alam, energy adviser of Consumers' Association of Bangladesh.

Contacted, High Court lawyer Barrister Tureen Afroz told the Daily Star that such proposals constitute conflict of interest.

"The Commission is the absolute authority to issue a licence. Here, if I say it's mandatory to join an association to get a license, it means the associations would be the regulating authority here. There will be a syndicate who will decide whom to include or not."

She added if BERC includes the proposal in new regulations, the associations will control the whole

Post-pandemic

orced travel restrictions since March

She will lead an 80-member

Addressing a curtain raiser at the

foreign ministry, Foreign Minister AK

Abdul Momen said Hasina will leave

for Finland for a private visit today,

and from there she will go to New

York on September 19. On September

21, she will join the UNGA high-level

She will deliver her speech in

Bangla on September 24 and will

inclusive economic development

and achievement in the health sector.

World peace, safe migration, equal

distribution of Covid-19 vaccines.

opening intellectual property rights,

Palestine and the Rohingya crises, and

Minister Boris Johnson, UN Secretary

General Antonio Guterres, Maldives

Vietnam

Barbados prime minister and EU

It was not confirmed yet if the PM

She will also plant a tree at the

UN Headquarters marking the birth

centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh

president,

Hasina will also meet UK Prime

climate justice will get priority.

will join the inaugural event.

returning home on October 1.

healthcare and economies.

Foreign Minister Momen said the

Along that line, the UN has set

"Building resilience through hope

to recover from Covid-19, rebuild

sustainability, respond to the needs of

the planet, respect the rights of people

and revitalize the UN" as the title for

announcement making vaccine a

public good. There should be no

discrimination in access to vaccines."

a major issue and the pandemic has

only aggravated it. The UNGA needs

to work on it effectively. The UN's

Sustainable Development Goals has

been badly affected and this needs

quick recovery, he said.

"We would seek, as before, an

Globally, inequality has become

world is hoping for a recovery from

the pandemic that has devastated

president,

president.

Mujibur Rahman.

investment.

the UNGA.

general debate sessions.

highlight Bangladesh's

delegation. Apart from that, a business

delegation will join her in New York.

last year.

market which is a violation of the competition act.

According to clause 15 of the Competition Act, 2012, no person shall, directly or indirectly, enter into any agreement or collusion, in respect of production, supply, distribution, storage or acquisition of any goods or services, which causes or is likely to cause an adverse effect on competition or creates monopoly or oligopoly in

BERC Chairman Md Abdul Jalil and member (gas) Md Maqbul-E-Elahi Chowdhury said such a clause could be a contradiction with the Competition Act, 2012, and so they will talk to the authorities concerned.

At first BERC member (Admin, Finance and Law) Mohammad Abu Faruge presented the background of this public hearing. He said they have changed some of the clauses of the BERC regulations 2003 in 2016 "mistakenly" without the law ministry's permission and published a gazette in this regard without the ministry's vetting.

After that, they started the process of rectifying the mistake in 2017.

The process slowed down during the pandemic, but they are now following every step of reforming the regulations, including pre-publishing, public hearing and sending it to the law ministry for their vetting for a Statutory Regulatory Orders (SRO) number, he said.

The 2016 Regulations had no SRO

During the public hearing yesterday, the representatives of different electricity, gas or petroleum companies placed their demands to reduce the license fees or renewals.

Some of them wanted the renewal of licenses after at least three to five years instead of existing one year. Some demanded changing their licensing categories, while some wanted the reduction the penalty.

The Draft Regulations have a clause 15 (B) -- where they mentioned the Commission could change the fees from time to time.

Two of the attendees demanded the withdrawal of the clause or the inclusion of a line that the commission could change the fees after a notification issued within a specific period and speaking to those concerned.

Chairman Abdul Jalil said that they will notify before any change.



A crowd of people waits to board buses near Sonargaon intersection in the capital yesterday. The vehicles were coming to the stoppage after long intervals due to heavy traffic on the city streets. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Evaly couple in cuffs

individuals involved with the company's financial management of embezzlement in a case filed with Gulshan Police Station.

The complaint mentioned that different media reported that Evaly embezzled Tk 700-800 crore from consumers like him through scams orchestrated in the name of selling goods.

e-commerce company disrupted Bangladesh's e-commerce landscape since its entry on December 16,2018 with its incredulous discounts.It began to face investigations amid allegations of delayed delivery of goods after receiving the payments.

Khandaker Al Moin, Rab's Legal and Media Wing director, told reporters at a briefing in the evening that the raid was conducted after a case was filed against the accused over misappropriation and deception.

Officers are primarily interrogating the couple at the Rab headquarters, he

"Different government agencies are working to make sure the consumers get their money back," Moin said.

Rassel and his wife live in a flat on the fifth floor of the eight-storey building. Witnesses said men in plainclothes were keeping an eye on the building since the Johr prayers and a Rab team entered the building around 3:45pm and left with Rassel and Shamima around 5:20pm in a microbus while the customers and vendors chanted slogans, demanding that the accused be given five months so that Evaly could pay back the

to reporters No officer talked during the raid.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Additional Metropolitan Magistrate Muhammad Asaduzzaman Nur ordered police to submit the probe report in the case before the court on October 21.

Earlier on July 15, A Dhaka court restricted Nasrin and Rassel from travelling abroad as part of an investigation into an alleged embezzlement of around Tk 338.62

The e-commerce company has been in discussion for some time amid the allegations as disgruntled customers demonstrated against the company.

On September 14, a governmentformed panel on e-commerce recommended that the commerce ministry hand over the matter of Evaly

to the home ministry for taking legal action for anomalies in its business.

The move came after Evaly, in response to the Commerce ministry's directive to explain the whereabouts of around Tk 338 crore that it owed the customers and merchants, submitted that its total liabilities were Tk 543 crore, including Tk 311 crore to more than 2 lakh customers and Tk 206 crore to merchants as of July 15.

It did not disclose the number of vendors it owes money nor clearly mention when the dues will be cleared.

In its submission, Evaly said its tangible asset was worth Tk 105 crore and intangible asset Tk 438 crore, including a brand value of Tk 422 crore, a claim that raised questions as the company carried out the asset valuation, including that of the brand value, on its own.

If the brand value is taken out, the value dips to Tk 122 crore. Evaly's equity was Tk 1 crore, according to the submission.

For months, Evaly offered incredible discounts on products. In some instances, it offered cashback as high as 120 percent.

As of the middle of March this year, according to a Bangladesh Bank inspection, Evaly's liability to customers was nearly Tk 214 crore and nearly Tk 190 crore to merchant suppliers. Following the findings, the commerce ministry on July 19 asked

Tk 338 crore that the e-commerce site owed customers and merchants. In its desperate revival efforts, Evaly by the end of July, disclosed Jamuna or refund the money, reads the case

Group's interest in investing in the Jamuna on September 7 said it scrapped its plan regarding an

investment in Evaly. Meanwhile, thousands of victims

face uncertainties as to whether they would ever get back their money. Customers and merchant suppliers of e-commerce platforms E-orange and Dhamaka are also in a similar situation.

#### WORRY OF LOSING MONEY

During the raid yesterday, Evaly customer Sajib told reporters that, "If I don't get my money back, my situation will be very bad. I am very

"I have invested the money by taking it from a cooperative. But everything seems to be gone," said

the man in tears. He said he paid the company Tk 3 lakh in January.

A vendor said, "What will happen to my money, who will I go to now? I would have gone to Rassel's home or office if he were not arrested. Now how will I get back the money? It will be a big loss.

Some demanded five months' time for the Evaly MD. THE CASE

In the case statement, Arif Baker alleged that he and his friends were attracted by the dazzling advertisement of Evaly and ordered some products from the

Between May 29 and June 19, the complainant paid Tk 3,10,597 through online banking at different

The company promised a full refund if it failed to deliver the products in 7 to 45 working days.

As the delivery was not made, he contacted the Evaly customer care representative. He said he made the last call on September 5, but failed to get the product. Every time they were contacted, they made false promises, said the complaint.

Complainant Arif alleged that on September 9, he along with Abul Kashedm and Abdullah Omar Haq went to Evaly's office on Road No. 14 in Dhanmondi. As they tried to meet with Rassel, they were obstructed.

A day later, he along with his two friends went to the office to talk to the company's representatives about Evaly to explain the whereabouts of the products, but they were yelled at. At one point, Rassel came out of his office and intimidated them and refused to provide them the products statement.

> "At one stage Russell also threatened to kill us," Arif Baker mentioned in the statement. He also alleged that the company chairman who was present there also refused to give the products and the money. She also misbehaved and intimidated them, he added.

> BNP MP Rumeen Farhana yesterday told parliament that due to the negligence of the government, companies like Evaly and E-Orange have looted thousands of crores of take in the name of business.

> Speaking on a point of order, she demanded that the government refund the money to those who were cheated from the government fund and later collect money from those institutions.

#### Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday told parliament that she wanted to make Ziaur Rahman an accused in the Bangabandhu murder case because there was no doubt in her mind that Zia was involved in the killing.

She also said Zia, a former president and founder of the opposition BNP, did not become a sector commander but rather worked as an "Odhinayak" during the country's Liberation War of

Hasina made these remarks while delivering her valedictory speech in the 14th session of the 11th parliament.

The leader of the House also said she does not run the country based on what the media says.

"There is no doubt that he [Ziaur Rahman] was involved in the 1975 massacre [of Bangabandhu and most of his family members]. I wanted to put his name as an accused [in the Bangabandhu murder case], but the then home secretary Rezaul Hayat told me that dead persons could not be made accused. But the name [of Zia] should have been [included] as

accused [in the case]," Hasina said. Hasina, also president of the ruling Awami League, said Bangabandhu's killers Faroog and Rashid in interviews with the BBC said Zia had been involved in the conspiracy. Besides, it was stated in the books of Anthony Mascarenhas and Lawrence Lifschultz.

"So, how can they [BNP] deny it?" she asked.

#### **DEBATE ON ZIA'S BODY**

Referring to the ongoing debate on Zia's grave at the city's Chandrima Udyan, Hasina said a box was brought from Chattogram which was claimed to contain his body. She also said freedom fighter Mir

Shawkat and the late army chief and former president Hussein Muhammad Ershad had admitted that the box did not contain Ziaur Rahman's body.

The prime minister said discussion s going on about the grave of Ziaur Rahman and whether his body is indeed there, but said that she did not want to say anything more about it.

She said Zia's body was not found after his death in May 1981.

### Surveillance

FROM PAGE 1

The education ministry sent the letter to the UGC on September 9 citing decisions of a September 2 meeting of the National Committee on Security Affairs (NCSA).

The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the letter.

Following a meeting between the education ministry, the UGC and public university VCs, the government on Tuesday decided that any university can resume in-person classes if all its students completed online registration for Covid-19 vaccination by September

The universities can reopen upon approval of their academic councils and syndicates.

The government on August 26 decided that students of all public and private universities will be inoculated against Covid by September and the institutions could start in-person classes from October 15 in phases.

The following day, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, alleged that conspirators were preparing to create unrest in the country centring the universities with a target to oust the government of Prime Minister Sheikh

He called upon the Chhatra League men to remain alert and not to get involved in internal wrangling over trivial matters, reported BSS.

Several VCs told yesterday's meeting that the situation was still under control. "They [VCs] do not see any major chance of creating an anarchic situation after the resumption of inperson classes," said a UGC member.

The VCs also said they were on alert against any kind of "militant activities" on the campuses.

"But as precaution, the meeting decided that universities will contact intelligence agencies and set up CCTV cameras at the main entrances and other sensitive places," the UGC member added.

The meeting also decided that if any university faced any problem in installing CCTV cameras, the UGC vould assist it.

The authorities should also consider that CCTV surveillance does not hamper personal activities of the students on the campuses, the meeting observed.

It further decided that VCs will keep close contact with local politicians and teachers' associations to avert any untoward incidents on the campus.

Speaking to The Daily Star, UGC member Prof Sazzad Hossain said the meeting discussed running universities after their reopening.

Asked whether it was held to discuss possible "anarchy" and "spread of militant propaganda" on the campuses, he said: "I don't see any concern about anarchy.

Chairman Prof Kazi Shahidullah said he did not attend the meeting as he was busy with family affairs.

Ahead of the COP26, the UNGA

and funding for both mitigation and the developed countries' commitment be fulfilled.

climate change, displacement of he would attend a side event of the SAARC foreign ministers in New York.

Myanmar.

direct contact with the new military government.

Hasina will attend a side event on the Rohingya crisis and meet the US business community to seek She will also hold a community meeting in New York and then go to Washington DC for private visit before

repatriation. About the Afghanistan crisis, he said Bangladesh would join the UN initiative to provide humanitarian Dhaka would wait and watch the developments under the Taliban regime before they recognise any new Afghan government.

bank account details of 11 leaders

journalism.

On behalf of the council, the statement was issued by its President Mahfuz Anam and acting general

would discuss the climate change issue, which is very important for Bangladesh.

"We would seek to keep global temperature below 1.5 degrees Celsius, adaptation," Momen said, adding that to mobilising \$100 billion for the climate vulnerable countries is yet to

Bangladesh wants compensation for the loss and damage caused by people due to river erosion, flood and cyclones, he said, adding that

He added there would not be any new proposal to be made to the UNGA on solving the Rohingya crisis, but added that it sticks to the previous recommendations of creating safe zones in Myanmar's Rakhine state for the Rohingyas to return and the accountability of those who committed genocide against the minority community. Some 750,000 Roingyas took shelter in Bangladesh following a military crackdown in

After the military coup in Myanmar in February this year, Momen said Bangladesh could not make any

State Minster for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam said the UN is yet to provide credentials to the Myanmar envoy to the UN following the coup. Once that is settled, Bangladesh will engage vigorously on Rohingya

assistance to Afghanistan and

#### Editors' Council

belonging to the same profession -- is ill-motivated and unprecedented, it

The council thinks that such an incident is a threat to independent

secretary Dewan Hanif Mahmud.

students against Covid-19. We will give top priority on the vaccination as the university is likely to open its residential halls soon. We will coordinate with the university authorities accordingly," Moinul told reporters after the visit.

Keeping in mind that the Covid situation might worsen after reopening of the university, the DU authorities sought extra money from the University Grants Commission

the authorities now plan to make a deficit budget of around Tk 9 crore, said DU sources.

sectors, they said. The university treasurer's office has reduced the budget for buying medicines and reagents to 6 lakh from Tk 26 lakh. Those Tk 20 lakh

Asked, Dr Sarwar said, "This is true. But when our university will reopen, we will need to buy a huge quantity of medicines for our students. We will

Urging the government to grant the fund, DU Treasurer Prof the Covid fund.

"We are ready to inoculate Mamtaz Uddin Ahmed said, "If the government does not help us, we won't be able to meet the deficit budget. Tk 9 crore isn't enough considering the huge number of our students.

Meanwhile, a possibility has arisen that the Covid-19 testing lab on the campus might be shut due to fund crunch, said sources.

up the lab at the Centre for Advanced Research in the social science faculty building a year ago following instructions of the health ministry. Wishing anonymity, a teacher said, "From the inception of the lab, we

spent Tk 66 lakh for testing. We got

no help from the health ministry. If

The university authorities had set

the situation does not improve, we might have to close down the lab." Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman said, "We need to collect money on time to tackle any situation which might arise after the university's reopening."

Asked, UGC member Dil Afroza Begum said, "We gave Tk 6 crore to the DU authorities for the cleaning and sanitation. They have used it for reconstructing their dormitories."

But the DU authorities denied the

# 43pc jabbed as DU prepares to reopen

A high-level government meeting recently decided that any university could reopen if all its students completed their vaccination registration by September 27.

Around 1.5 lakh students of medical and dental colleges as well as other health institutions returned to the classroom recently after taking both doses of Covid vaccine.

PREPARATIONS ON The DU authorities said they were taking preparations keeping in mind that the dorms would reopen soon.

Recently, this reporter visited nine

dormitories where he saw workers

washing and cleaning floors. Some were renovating walls. The authorities also set up hand-washing facilities for students. Thirty-nine isolation have already been readied at the university's medical centre for

Covid patients. Besides, enough

preparations have been taken to open

vaccination booths at the centre, said

Dr Sarwar Jahan, chief medical officer

at the centre. Besides, 13 beds have been prepared ready for dengue patients, he said.

Meanwhile, Abu Hussain Md Moinul Ahsan, Dhaka district civil surgeon, visited the centre yesterday and looked at the preparations.

**COVID BUDGET INSUFFICIENT** 

(UGC) to handle the situation. Failing to get the additional fund,

The money would be cut from budget allocations for different

would go into the Covid fund, said

face many other problems in future."

allegation and said that they have Tk 6.30 crores for reconstructing their dormitories. This fund isn't related to