



Around 24 students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology stage a hunger strike in front of Sust Vice-Chancellor Farid Uddin Ahmed's residence on the sixth day of demonstrations yesterday. Of the students, at least nine were female. The protesters' only demand now is the VC's resignation. PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Sust students go on hunger strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Twenty-four students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (Sust) went on a "hunger strike until death" in front of the VC's residence yesterday demanding his resignation.

The students, including nine females, began the strike at 2:50pm as Vice Chancellor Farid Uddin Ahmed did not step down by noon despite students' ultimatum.

Speaking at a press briefing, a spokesperson of protesters said Farid Uddin lost his credibility as the VC as he ordered police action against students on Sunday.

The incident left 30-40 students injured.

"We issued an ultimatum to the VC asking him to resign by this noon, but he did not comply. He is lying about the protest and he has no sensitivity towards the students. Now we will continue the hunger strike until death. Either the VC will step down or we will die."

Meanwhile, a group of Sust teachers formed a human chain in front of the main entrance to the university around noon, protesting "indecent remarks" about teachers by "anti-VC students".

Prof Laila Ashrafun of social science department alleged that the protesting students were making "indecent comments" about teachers on social media.

However, Sust Teachers Association President Dr Tulsi Kumar Das said the association has no links with the protest.

On Thursday, students of Begum Sirajunnessa Chowdhury Hall launched a protest over allegations that Provost Zafirin Ahmed Liza misbehaved with a student who called her to report mismanagement at the dormitory.

The demand for the VC's resignation was raised after students were injured as police used truncheons on them, fired rubber bullets and sound grenades on Sunday evening to free the VC from confinement to his office.

None can look down on us now

Says prime minister

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said nobody can ignore Bangladesh anymore as the image of the country has brightened for its successes in ensuring socio-economic development and promoting global peace.

"Once there were so many negative words against Bangladesh abroad. Still, some people are there who like to undermine it. But the country's image has brightened for its socio-economic development, and for many other reasons," she said.

The PM was addressing the graduation ceremony of DSCSC-2021-2022 course virtually from the Gono Bhaban. The event was held at Sheikh Hasina Complex of Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC) in Mirpur Cantonment.

Hasina said the country has successfully regained the dignity that was obtained through the victory in the 1971 Liberation War but was lost after August 15 of 1975.

"Now no one can neglect Bangladesh. It has gained the dignity as a role model for development. It will have to be upheld.

"We won't fight against anyone. But we won't remain silent if any blow comes to our independence and sovereignty. We'll resist or protest it. We've built our armed forces in that way."

Hasina also asked the newly graduated and trained officers to work to build a prosperous Bangladesh.



'A daily reality'

Many Dhaka dwellers complain of gas crisis on regular basis

ASIFUR RAHMAN

For many households and industries in Dhaka and its adjacent areas, gas supply has become as scarce as hen's teeth for two months now.

Take the case of Nilufar Mannan, a housewife from Mohammadpur's Tajmahal Road. Since winter started, she has to finish her cooking for the day before 10 am as the piped gas supply to her kitchen just dies.

"It is so stressful," she told The Daily Star yesterday.

It is a similar story over at Jatrabari, about 12 kilometres from Nilufar's neighbourhood.

"Since early morning, we don't get any gas supply," said Soheli Rana Shuvo, a resident of Jatrabari.

The situation has gotten so bad in recent days that buying breakfast from outside has become a daily reality.

The Daily Star contacted residents in Rajabazar, Jigatola, Mohakhali, Adabar, Badda, Banasree, Mirpur, Pallabi and Old Dhaka and all said the same: they were suffering from a shortage of gas supply.

For Shurovi Rosario, a homemaker from East Rajabazar, her husband has come up with a costly alternative to paper over the crisis in piped gas supply to her kitchen: get an electric burner and over.

"We are having to pay extra electricity bills, while also paying the bill for the gas that we are not being supplied -- this is unfair," she told The Daily Star

yesterday.

It is not just the households; the industries that have mushroomed surrounding Dhaka are also suffering from production losses for the gas crisis.

And there does not seem to be an end to the sufferings.

Since September 19, the government has started to keep the CNG filling stations closed every day for four hours with the view to providing an uninterrupted piped gas supply.

Evidently, it is not helping much.

The increase in the international price is another reason for the gas supply crisis, said an official of the energy division of the power, energy and mineral resources ministry.

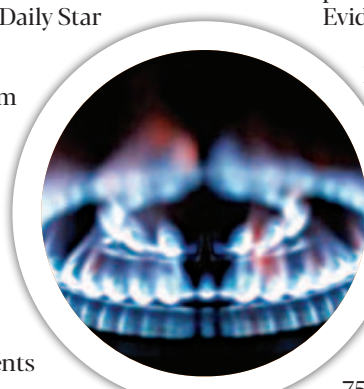
The current demand for gas in the country is more than 3,800 mmcf/d (million cubic feet per day).

The distributors supplied 2,600-2,700 mmcf/d.

Bangladesh produced more than 75 percent of the required gas and imported 20 percent, according to officials of the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission. Only 5 percent of the required gas was bought from the international spot market.

Bangladesh imported LNG at \$36 per MMBtu from the spot market in October 2021 and got price quotes as high as \$51 from a supplier.

Experts said the government's increasing dependency on the open market without searching for new gas sources could cause suffering for all.



Covid pandemic 'nowhere near over'

Warns WHO chief as France, Germany post record cases; UK PM drops curbs

AGENCIES

The World Health Organization has warned that the Covid-19 pandemic is far from over, as France, Germany and Brazil posted new infection records in the past 24 hours.

The highly-transmissible Omicron strain has spread unabated around the world, pushing some governments to impose fresh measures while speeding up the rollout of vaccine booster shots.

WHO Chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Tuesday told reporters at its Geneva headquarters.

The UN health chief warned against dismissing Omicron as mild. "Omicron may be less severe, on average, but the narrative that it is a mild disease is misleading," he said.

In US, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Tuesday advised against travel to 22 nations and territories

because of a rising number of Covid-19 cases, including for Israel, Australia, Egypt, Albania, Argentina and Uruguay.

Top US infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci said on Monday that it's still too early to predict whether Omicron's rapid spread will help push coronavirus from the pandemic phase to a more manageable endemic phase -- but "I would hope that that's the case."

In England, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said yesterday that people will no longer be required to wear face masks anywhere or work from home from next week, adding that scientists believed a wave of the Omicron coronavirus variant had peaked nationally, reports Reuters.

India reported new infections at an eight-month high and a government scientist warned it will take weeks before data on hospitalisations and deaths will show how severe the latest wave driven by the Omicron variant will be.



Bus drivers and helpers of Mohakhali terminal stand in line to get vaccinated at the Dhaka District Bus Minibus Road Transport Workers Union office yesterday -- the first day of the government's special inoculation drive for road transport workers, which will gradually expand to Sayedabad, Gabtoli and Phulbari terminals later. Story on page 3. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



Qazi Anwar Husain passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Qazi Anwar Husain, the creator of the popular book series "Masud Rana" and the man behind the teen detective series "Tin Goyenda" that engrossed generations, passed away yesterday.

He was 86.

Anwar suffered a stroke and a heart attack simultaneously while on life support, his sister cultural personality Sanjida Khatun told The Daily Star.

"He had been on life support at Birdem Hospital and was moved to its ICU on Tuesday. He breathed his last at 4:40pm yesterday," she added.

He was diagnosed with prostate cancer on October 31 and had been hospitalised five times since then.

Anwar, born on July 19, 1936, in Dhaka, got his master's degree in Bangla literature and language from Dhaka University.

He started publishing house Seba Prokashoni with Tk 10,000 given by his father National Professor Qazi Motahar Hossain, also an eminent

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1