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Shut errant tanneries now

JS body tells industries ministry, rebukes it for delays

RASHIDUL HASAN and PINAKI ROY

A parliamentary body yesterday expressed resentment over the industries ministry’s “deliberate delay” in shutting down the tanners inside the Savar Tannery Industrial Estate, which are severely polluting the Dhaleshwari river.

In its meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, the parliamentary standing committee on the environment, forest and climate change ministry asked the ministry to show zero tolerance towards the tanners in question.

On August 23 last year, the body recommended closing the estate because it does not have adequate facilities to treat all liquid and solid waste generated by the tanneries.

According to statistics placed before the standing committee, the estate has the capacity to treat around 25,000 cubic metres of liquid waste every day, but the tanners generate around 40,000 cubic metres of liquid waste.

It means 15,000 cubic metres of liquid waste are dumped into the Dhaleshwari without any treatment, causing severe pollution.

In 2003, the government took an initiative to build the BSCIC Tannery Industrial Estate on 200 acres in Hemayetpur after moving all tanneries from the capital’s Hazaribagh to prevent environmental pollution and to protect the Buriganga.

After yesterday’s meeting, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, chief of the parliamentary watchdog, told The Daily

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PHOTO: TIMU HOSSAIN

SPLISH, SPLASH ... Two common green magpies beating the heat with a dip in a pond in Sylhet’s Satchhari. This strikingly colourful bird is a common sight in forests across southeast Asia. Easily visible for its vivid plumage and unique facial markings, it can often be seen darting among trees in low-lying forests and wetlands, searching for prey to satisfy its voracious appetite.



Pakistan risks descending into a civil war

Says former PM Imran as he demands elections

DAWN/ANN

Pakistan’s ousted prime minister and the Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has warned that the country would descend into a civil war if elections were not announced.

In an unusual attack on Pakistan’s powerful military, ousted PM Imran Khan has admitted that his government was a “weak one” which was “blackmailed from everywhere” as the power was not with him and “everyone knows where that is”.

Imran Khan was ousted from power in April after losing a no-confidence vote in his leadership, which he alleged was part of a US-led conspiracy targeting him because of his independent foreign policy decisions on Russia, China and Afghanistan.

He had reportedly fallen out with the country’s powerful military before he was removed by a united opposition that accused him of mismanaging the government, the economy and foreign relations.

“We will see if they allow us to go towards elections through legal and constitutional means otherwise this country will go towards [a] civil war,” he said in an

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PROPOSED PRICE HIKE OF POWER, GAS

CAB comes up with alternative solutions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) yesterday proposed alternatives to hiking gas and electricity prices and urged the government not to increase the tariffs.

However, the state minister for power, energy and mineral resource said the government will adjust the prices in such a way that those remain “affordable” for consumers. He said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will make the final decision in this regard.

The CAB’s proposal and the state minister’s response came at a “Citizens’ Meeting”, organised by the CAB, at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) recently held public hearings on hiking retail price of gas and bulk price of electricity. The BERC’s technical committee has recommended raising the gas price by 20 percent on average and electricity price by 58 percent on average.

The commission, however, is

yet to announce any decision in this regard.

At the meeting yesterday, CAB, a platform to protect consumers’ interests, unveiled an “energy transition policy” for the government’s consideration.

Speaking at the event, CAB Senior Vice President Prof M Shamsul Alam urged the government to allocate Tk 12,600 crore as annual subsidy

The government can reduce the power production cost by withdrawing the hiked price of furnace oil and thus save Tk 8,102 crore, says CAB.

to the energy sector, which is now around Tk 10,500 crore.

“Along with providing subsidy, the government should take initiatives to cut the predatory expenditure of Tk 6,588 crore in this sector. If this can be achieved, then the per unit gas price will come down to Tk 9.69 on average, which is now

Tk 9.70,” he said.

He said the government can reduce the power production cost by withdrawing the hiked price of furnace oil and thus save Tk 8,102 crore.

In March this year, the government hiked the price of furnace oil to Tk 74 a litre, up from Tk 60 in December last year.

Shamsul said the government can save another Tk 10,321 crore by reducing dependency on the privately-owned quick rental plants and single-cycle power plants.

He said the government can save at least Tk 16,279 crore by withdrawing the recently imposed taxes on the import of petroleum, reinstating the tax break on the import of petroleum, and by importing furnace oil through the state-run Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation instead of private importers.

Nasrul Hamid, state minister of power, energy and mineral resources, said, “We are not increasing energy and electricity

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Now potato prices jump

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The price of potatoes is now on the rise in different markets in Munshiganj in line with the spiralling cost of other essentials.

A kilogram of potato is now selling for Tk 20-22, up from Tk 12-13 two weeks ago.

The price hike has been blamed on a section of traders, who have hoarded potatoes in cold storage.

There is a shortage of potatoes in wholesale markets as potatoes are not coming out of the cold storage, according to Swapon Miah, a vegetable seller in a kitchen market in Munshiganj town.

At present, retailers are getting by with the potatoes that farmers are harvesting and selling straight to the wholesalers.

Between January and April, potatoes were cultivated in about 35,796 hectares of land in Munshiganj and 11 lakh tonnes of potatoes were produced, according to the district agriculture office.

Farmers will run out of potatoes to supply to wholesalers in two weeks or so, said Alauddin Hossain, a vegetable seller in Munshiganj’s Sreepalli area.

“Then there will be a crisis,” he added.

Rashraj Madbar, who has been hoarding the tuber, says he is waiting for the price to go up further to release his stock from the cold storage. “If I sell them now, I will have to incur losses,” he added.

And yet, the farmers, who are growing the vegetable, say they will be racking up losses as their cultivation cost was high this year due to rain.

Kamrul Hasan Russel, a farmer of Hamidpur

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At least 50 boats of a group of Bede (gipsy) people anchored under a walkway built over the Turag in Tongi’s Abdullahpur. In the dry seasons, the group scatters as it is difficult for them to live together in one place due to declining water levels. They, however, reunite in the rainy season. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

DEFAMATION CASE

Johnny Depp scores near-total victory

Ex-wife Heard ‘heartbroken’

REUTERS, Los Angeles

Actor Johnny Depp won more than \$10 million in damages on Wednesday, achieving a near-total victory in a defamation suit against ex-wife Amber Heard to cap a six-week trial featuring graphic testimony about the stars’ soured relationship.

A seven-person jury in Virginia also ruled for Heard on one counterclaim against Depp. The “Pirates of the Caribbean” film star depicted the decision as a vindication, and his former wife said it was “a disappointment.”

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Ancient Mayan maize god sculpture found in Mexico



AFFP, Mexico City

Archaeologists have uncovered a roughly 1,300-year-old sculpture representing the head of a Mayan maize god in ruins in southeastern Mexico, the National Institute of Anthropology and History said.

The artefact was found in Palenque facing east to west, “which would symbolize the birth of the maize plant with the first rays of the sun,” it said in a statement Tuesday.

The sculpture was part of “an offering that was placed on a pond, emulating the entrance of the deity to the underworld, in an aquatic

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