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BNP calls for intensifying movement

Holds huge rally at Nayapaltan

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday urged the people, especially the youths, to get ready to intensify the movement against the current "fascist regime" by taking over the streets.

"Drawing the attention of the students and youths, I would like to say that we waged a war and liberated the country when we were young...the youths have to wake up once again to liberate the country for ensuring our future safety, prosperity, justice, parity, and social esteem," he said.

Speaking at a huge rally in front of the BNP's central office at Nayapaltan, he said their party has launched a movement to save the people of Bangladesh and protect the country from "misrule", reports UNB.

Fakhrul urged the government to step down immediately and hand over power to a non-party administration.

"The parliament must be dissolved

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Thousands of BNP activists take part in a rally in front of the party headquarters in the capital's Nayapaltan to protest the hike in fuel prices. It was organised by BNP's Dhaka north and south city units yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Swiss envoy's claim not based on facts: Momen

HC asks if govt sought info on Bangladeshis who deposited money with Swiss banks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said Swiss Ambassador Nathalie Chuard's comments that Bangladesh did not seek specific information on the money its citizens deposited with the Swiss banks were not grounded in facts.

He said the Bangladesh Bank governor and the finance secretary confirmed they had sought the information from the Swiss authorities.

"But they [the Swiss] didn't respond."

Speaking to journalists at his ministry yesterday, Momen said, "I told them [BB governor and finance secretary] to issue public statements in this regard because one shouldn't get away with making false claims."

Asked if the foreign ministry would talk to the Swiss embassy, he said, "Let the Bangladesh Bank and finance secretary first issue public statements ... then we will talk to the embassy."

At the Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh Talk at the Jatiya Press Club on Wednesday, the Swiss ambassador said the Bangladesh government did not seek any specific

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Lobbying on for top posts of police

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Just over a week after a major reshuffle of the district superintendents of police, all eyes are on the police department in anticipation of possible changes in the top brass.

There will be new faces in some top positions of the police's different units as either the retirement age of the incumbent officials in those posts is nearing within a couple of months or they are going to be given new posts.

The posts include inspector general of police, additional inspector general (administration) of Police Headquarters (PHQ), Criminal Investigation Department chief, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) director general and Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) commissioner.

Many officials have already started lobbying for their preferred posts, said sources at the home ministry and PHQ.

IGP Benazir Ahmed will reach retirement age on September 30.

According to government rules, an official goes into post-retirement leave (PRL) after turning 60.

Names of several officials are being talked about as the next police chief.

Some officials say Benazir would continue in the post on a one-year contract. Others, however, say he might be replaced with another competent official.

The name of Rab Director General Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun, an official of eighth BCS batch, is coming to the fore as the next IGP. He will reach retirement age on January 11.

Other names include SM Ruhul Amin, Mallick Faqru Islam and Md Kamrul Ahsan, all officers of 12th BCS batch, the sources added.

If Benazir stays in the post through a one-year contract, Monirul Islam, an official of 15th BCS batch and the

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PRICE HIKE OF FUEL

Regulator's mandate ignored

SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK

The Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission Act 2003 clearly states that only the commission, a statutory body for regulating the country's energy sector, can increase or adjust fuel prices.

But the sharp hike in fuel prices from August 6 was not done in accordance with the law; it was done through a circular issued by the power, energy and mineral resources ministry, energy experts said.

The sudden rise in fuel prices has hit people hard at a time when they were already reeling from skyrocketing prices of essentials.

"The increase in fuel prices is a violation of the law. Such a rise could be termed [a form of] plunder," said noted energy expert Prof Shamsul Alam.

"The officials involved with the hike are to blame here," he told The Daily Star.

According to Section 34 (1) of the BERC Act, notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, the price of power generation in wholesale, bulk and retail, and the supply of energy at the level of end-user, shall be determined in accordance with the policy and methodology made by the commission in consultation

with the government.

Section 34 (4) further states that the commission shall "determine tariff after giving hearing to licencees and others who have interest in it". The punishment for violating the law as per Section 42 includes three years' imprisonment or a fine of Tk 5,000.

"...Before 2003, either BPC or the ministry set oil prices through government orders. Ever since a specific law was enacted in 2003, all the orders that the ministry issued regarding the increase of the prices of any petroleum products can be deemed illegal."

Jyotirmoy Barua, Supreme Court Lawyer

Prof Alam, also the vice-president of Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB), said top officials of the ministry were at fault as they had not included the provisions of the BERC Act in the file pertaining to the price hike.

"The officials concerned did not include the things we are now raising questions about in the file

before sending it to the government for a decision."

Contacted, BERC Chairman Abdul Jalil said that as per the law, the cost of fuel will be determined by the commission.

He said that according to Section 34 of the act, the BERC in consultation with the government had formulated rules for enacting the law.

"We sent the rules to the [energy] ministry over 10 years ago, but the ministry neither took the law ministry's vetting nor did it send them to the government," he claimed.

"We have completed our task and the rest is lying with the ministry. Since the ministry is not doing it [accepting the rules], we cannot do anything about it. There is a lawsuit filed by the CAB over the matter. We have maintained in the court that we are always prepared to perform our legal duties," Jalil added.

Jyotirmoy Barua, a prominent Supreme Court lawyer, said the act clearly states that BERC is solely responsible for adjusting energy prices.

"But the commission has never fixed the price of any petroleum products. Before 2003, either BPC [Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation] or the ministry set

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Tell people why fuel prices were raised

Cabinet asks energy ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet has directed the energy ministry to make it clear to people the reason behind the recent fuel price hike.

The directive came from yesterday's cabinet meeting presided over by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"They [energy ministry and BPC] have already made a statement over [the fuel price hike] before the press. They are asked to clarify again in the shortest possible time," said Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam while briefing the media after the meeting.

Anwarul said the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation chairman had given details recently.

In reply to a query whether the prime minister had issued any directives as the fuel prices were taking a toll on people, he said, "They [the ministry or BPC] will make everything clear."

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) on Wednesday said the BPC could have used the Tk 46,858 crore profit it made since 2015 to continue the subsidy on fuel and thus prevent the price hike.

Hours after, BPC Chairman ABM Azad refuted CPD's statement saying that it had made a profit of about Tk 42,992 crore in those years and half of the money was spent on development projects and investment, to pay arrears tax and other purposes.

Drugs Act 2022
Keeping a provision of maximum 10-year jail and Tk 10 lakh fine for producing counterfeit medicines, the cabinet approved in principle the draft of the Drugs Act-2022.

The same punishment will also be applicable

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Facebook use plunges among US teens



AFP, San Francisco

US teens have left Facebook in droves over the past seven years, preferring to spend time at video-sharing venues YouTube and TikTok, according to a Pew Research Center survey data out Wednesday.

TikTok has "emerged as a top social media platform for US teens" while Google-run YouTube "stands out as the most common platform used by teens," the report's authors wrote.

Pew's data comes as Facebook owner Meta is in a battle with TikTok for social media primacy, trying to keep the maximum number of users as part of its multi-billion dollar ad-driven business.

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KIDS WILL BE KIDS! ... A mother Capped Langur watching her children play fighting (inset) while she sits on a branch and chews on leaves at the Satchhari National Park in Habiganj's Chunarughat upazila. The primate is native to Bangladesh, India and Myanmar. Due to illegal inbreeding, possession, trafficking and deforestation, its numbers have been declining in the country. It has also been listed in the "vulnerable to extinction" category by the IUCN. These gentle, arboreal creatures are generally sociable and verbose. However, much like humans, they can get aggressive when establishing social order in their herd. This mother, though, seems to be too tired to stop her kids from being kids!

PHOTO: MOSABBER HOSSAIN RIBON