



Covering their faces and heads with scarfs and umbrellas to protect themselves from heat, RMG workers step outdoors for lunch in the capital's Mohammadpur area yesterday. After a scorching April, May is yet to bring any relief. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

POWER, ENERGY SECTORS

First end graft, then hike price if needed

Recommends CAB at press briefing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It would be unfair for consumers if electricity and energy prices were hiked without addressing the irregularities, wastage, and corruption in these sectors, Consumers Association of Bangladesh said yesterday.

"Owing to the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provision) Act 2010, ambiguity [in this sector] has increased and competition has been killed. The corruption, irregularities and opacities must be addressed before increasing the price," CAB President Gulam Rahman said at a briefing at Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

He said prices can be hiked if necessary only after addressing these issues, but that has to be done through Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) transparently.

Reading out a written statement, M Shamsul Alam, energy adviser to CAB, said the government takes share of the profit and also collects corporate tax, which further increases the production costs.

He suggested that if the government considered costs without aiming for profit, electricity and energy service prices could be better controlled.

He further claimed that investors exploit the opportunity for excessive profits through arbitrary contracts under the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provision) Act 2010, resulting in rising prices and subsidies to address the deficit.

I will pay whatever price (of electricity and fuel) the government fixes. But why should I take responsibility for the corruption and waste in these sectors?

IJAZ HOSSAIN
Former professor of Buet

Shamsul said, "There is still a deficit of Tk 40,000 crore in the electricity sector. If there was no wastage, embezzlement and looting, this would not have happened. In the coming years, electricity production will increase, so will the profits and the deficit. That effort is underway."

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Govt served legal notice to formulate eco-friendly law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A legal notice was served on the government yesterday, asking it to formulate environment-friendly law for felling and planting trees.

The notice, sent by Supreme Court lawyer Md Tanvir Ahmed, also asked for immediate steps to reduce heatwave and temperature across the country.

He sent the notice after Bangla daily Ittefaq published two reports on April 24 and 25, on felling 3,000 trees in Kushtia and on suspension of this decision. The notice took note of a report published on Prothom Alo on April 29, that said 90 percent of the area in the capital is in danger due to heatwave.

Secretary at the environment ministry, director general of environment department, chief conservator of forests, director of Dhaka metropolitan office under DoE, and divisional forest officer in Kushtia were made notice recipients.

NARAYANGANJ STEEL RE-ROLLING MILLS

Where lives get 're-rolled' into misery

Workers compelled to work in unsafe conditions

SAURAV HOSSAIN SIAM

The day of March 23, 2022 often returns in the form of nightmares to torment Sheikh Farid, a steel re-rolling mill worker. On this date he lost three of his fingers while working at the mill.

Forty-year-old Farid was working at the furnace section of that mill in Narayanganj's Fatullah area, which had little to no safety measures to keep the workers safe from accidents.

"There was a large, speedy fan operating near the furnace with no fence covering its blades. While working, suddenly my left hand came into contact with the blades, and three of my fingers were gone in the blink of an eye," recalled Farid.

While losing three fingers due to unsafe working conditions was bad enough, much more misery was awaiting Farid in the months that followed.

"I could not work for around five months after the accident. However, I did not get any compensation from the factory authorities. I even visited different government offices, including the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE), seeking compensation. But I did not get any, as the factory didn't give me an appointment letter while hiring me," he said.

After that, he had no option

but to join another factory to earn bread for his family.

Not just Farid, but hundreds of other workers in steel re-rolling mills are victims of injustice, being compelled to work in hazardous working conditions for low wages.



For one, they risk their lives by working without safety measures, which causes frequent accidents. Secondly, in case of accidents, they receive no compensation as they don't even get appointment letters and identity cards from the factories.

As per rules, factory authorities are bound to provide quality safety jackets, shoes, helmets, and gloves.

But hardly any factory complies with the rule, according to over a dozen workers who spoke to this

correspondent.

They claimed that they get lower wages than the government-set pay structure.

According to the government's pay structure, the minimum monthly wage of a steel re-rolling worker is Tk 10,600. But most

of the workers get Tk 5,000 to Tk 6,000, according to multiple workers.

"I never got a safety jacket, helmet, or boots. Normally I cover my head with a towel and wear jeans. A few days ago, I was working barefoot when suddenly an iron chunk fell on my feet and got me severely injured," said Jakir Hossain, a worker at a steel re-rolling mill in Fatullah.

Uzzal Hossain, who works at

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'Will build open jails like developed countries'

Home minister tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday told the parliament that the government has taken a plan to build open jails in Bangladesh like in developed countries.

He said this in reply to a query from Awami League MP Mamunur Rashid Kiran of Noakhali-3.

The minister said 160 acres of land have been acquired in Ukhia upazila of Cox's Bazar district to construct an open jail following the model of Malaysia's Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP).

"The construction of the open jail will start soon," he said.

Responding to a query from lawmaker Nizam Uddin Hazari of Feni-2, the home boss said 83,577 posts have been increased in the Bangladesh Police in the past three terms of the current government to modernise the force.

"Recruiting manpower for these posts has been ensured through a transparent and corruption-free process," he also said.

The minister said the

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UPAZILA POLLS

EC to send letter to Speaker for keeping lawmakers in check

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission has decided to urge Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury to inform lawmakers to refrain from exerting influence in their localities and abide by the electoral code of conduct.

Election Commissioner Md Alamgir said the commission has already decided that the EC secretary will send a letter to the secretary of the parliament secretariat. At least two high officials of the EC yesterday said the letter will be sent to the parliament secretary within a day or two.

"The letter will clarify what kind of election we want and urge lawmakers to refrain from exerting illegal influence," Alamgir told reporters at his EC office.

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EMPOWERING BANGLADESHIS US, Switzerland, Canada launch 'Nagorikata'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Aiming to strengthen civic engagement and empower Bangladeshis – particularly women, girls, and marginalised groups – the US, Canada, and Switzerland jointly launched the "Nagorikata: Civic Engagement Fund" yesterday.

The programme took place at a city hotel in presence of various stakeholders and civic society bodies.

While presenting a detailed outline of the initiative, Adi Walker of GFA Consulting Group said this fund aims to amplify the voice of citizens and safeguard their rights to equality, privacy, freedom of expression, and access to information.

It will increase outreach and mobilise diverse

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PRAYER TIMING
MAY 3

Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:15	12:30	4:45	6:31	8:00
JAMAAT 4:50	1:15	5:00	6:35	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Protect rights of migrant workers: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Training at district level, monitoring and reintegrating returnees are needed to ensure rights of Bangladeshi migrant workers, said experts at a programme yesterday.

Titled "Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers in Destination Countries and their Sustainable Re-Integration", the programme was organised by Warbe Development Foundation.

Imran Ahmad, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee of the ministry of expatriates' welfare and overseas employment, said, "To prepare skilled and trained expatriates, there are 100 technical training centers (TTC) across the country. But 40 are running in name only. There is no data on how many people are being trained in the 60 that are operational. I'm looking for the data myself."

"Even after being a minister for five years, there were a lot of things I wanted to do [for migrant workers], but couldn't," he added.

"Our commitment was to set up TTCs in all upazilas. But, in the last five years, I have been able to set up just 50 TTCs. It is my failure," said the former minister.

"We have policies, however, there is

a lack of implementation. If they were implemented, we will not have to hold seminars on the rights of expatriates," said lawmaker Shammil Ahmed.

Lawmaker Pankaj Debnath said although the infrastructure for TTCs is there, shortage of trainings, courses and trainers are the key hurdles.

Stressing on implementation of policies and guidelines, migration expert Asif

Munir said, "Even if the government has good intentions, many things may not be implemented. It is necessary to monitor whether the MoUs and bilateral labour agreements between the home and destination countries are being implemented thoroughly."

Standard recruit systems are absent in the country. There is a big gap in the recruitment process done by the recruiting agencies. They don't care whether they [candidates] are skilled. Besides, it is not monitored whether all the rights of an expatriate are being protected after reaching the destination country, said Jasiya Khatun, director of Warbe Development Foundation.

Precise re-integration is needed for those who return from abroad or are deported, she added.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Training at district level
- Proper monitoring
- Reintegrating returnees
- Implementing policies



Construction materials remain dumped on a section of road-32 in the capital's Uttara sector 7, obstructing vehicular movement completely. Furthermore, locals are compelled to use this dug-up road amid risks for the past few weeks. Meanwhile, drainage works continue at a snail's pace. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON