

Retirement age will be raised in ‘Prottoy’ scheme

Says National Pension Authority

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will amend the retirement age-related provision of the new pension scheme Prottoy, said the National Pension Authority.

The retirement age of teachers is 65 but the scheme's provision stipulates that beneficiaries will start receiving pension from the age of 60. So, the government will bring necessary changes to the provision of the scheme, the authority said in a press release yesterday.

The press release was issued to clarify several issues related to the Prottoy scheme that was launched in March for the employees of autonomous, self-governing, nationalised, statutory and similar organisations.

“Employees get a fund against lamp grant and PRL [post-retirement

A subscriber to Prottoy will get pension throughout his lifetime. If the person dies, a nominee will get the pension for up to 15 years after starting to receive pension.

leave] on the basis of their earned leave and they will get it as usual,” it said.

A subscriber to Prottoy will get pension throughout his lifetime. If the person dies, a nominee will get the pension for up to 15 years after starting to receive pension.

For instance, if a pensioner dies after receiving pension for five years, the nominee will get pension for 10 years, the press release added.

All the provisions of the new pension scheme will apply to those who joined work after July 1, 2024.

The non-contributory pension system is increasing the expenditures of the government day by day and that is why this system is not sustainable. Neighbouring India also started a contributory pension system in 2004, the National Pension Authority said.



A man running across the rail track near Narayanganj's Chamber Road, with an incoming train just a few feet away. Meanwhile, multiple makeshift shops stand dangerously close to the tracks, raising the possibilities of accidents.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Halving food waste can reduce hunger for 153m people

Say OECD, UN's food agency in a joint report

AFP, Paris

Halving food waste could cut climate-warming emissions and end undernourishment for 153 million people globally, the OECD and the UN's food agency said in a joint report yesterday.

Around a third of food produced for human consumption gets lost or wasted globally, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) – resulting in useless emissions and less available food for those who need it.

By 2033, the number of calories lost and wasted between produce leaving farms and reaching shops and households could be more than twice the number of calories currently consumed in low-income countries in a year, the report

warned.

Cutting in two the amount of food lost and wasted along the journey from farm to fork “has the potential to reduce global agricultural greenhouse gas emissions by four percent and the number of undernourished people by 153 million by the year 2030,” according to the report.

“This target is a highly ambitious upper bound and would require substantial changes by both consumers and producer side,” they added.

Agriculture, forestry and other land use account for around one-fifth of global human-induced greenhouse gas emissions.

UN nations have committed to cutting per capita food waste by 50 percent by 2030 as part of sustainable development

goals but there is no global target for reducing food loss along the production supply chain.

Between 2021 and 2023, fruit and vegetables accounted for more than half of the lost and wasted food given their extremely perishable nature and relatively short shelf life, according to the report.

Cereals followed, accounting for over a quarter of lost and wasted food.

The FAO estimates that approximately 600 million people will be facing hunger in 2030.

“Measures to reduce food loss and waste could significantly increase food intake worldwide as more food becomes available and prices fall, ensuring greater access to food for low-income populations,” the report said.

Govt may let its employees trade in shares

FROM PAGE 1

His case is simple yet intriguing. He entered the share market with insider information, an unlawful practice as per the capital market regulations, to mint money, they said.

“If the government employees are allowed to buy and sell in the stock market, corruption will increase manifold. There are both profits and losses in the speculative market. If an employee incurs losses, that employee may tilt towards corruption. Such an opportunity should not be given at all,” former bureaucrat Firoz Mia told The Daily Star yesterday.

Government servants cannot lobby lawmakers, high officials, and political or non-political personalities, who have relationships with the government, to get direct or indirect benefits.

The draft now includes a provision that they cannot even send any electronic message to get any favours.

Officials said the use of electronic

messages was mentioned in the draft to block a way of lobbying.

The draft said government servants can be candidates, if the rules allow and upon approval from the appropriate authorities, for posts in non-political organisations.

It also said they cannot join any protest programme violating rules, and they cannot make any statement to the media on behalf of any organisation without any approval.

Officials said if the draft is finally approved with this provision, government employees would require permissions for holding any press conference.

The draft forbids government servants from directly or indirectly visiting any foreign mission or aid agency to get invitation for travelling abroad or to avail training abroad.

As per the existing rules, government employees are not barred from becoming members of any recreational clubs.

Citing the “Boat Club”, a high official said the incident involving actress Pori Moni embarrassed the government as a high-ranking official was the president of the club.

A provision has been included in the draft so that government employees cannot be members of clubs where people indulge in “unethical activities”.

Sources said the existing rules do not specify what government employees can or cannot do on social media.

However, the draft said the government can take action against its employees if they violate the “Government Employee Discipline and Appeal Rules 2018”.

Public Administration Minister Farhad Hossain said the draft was at the final stage, but there would be some changes.

“... I can say that a modern and time-befitting code of conduct will be formulated,” he said.

Load shedding despite lower demand

FROM PAGE 1

At least 10,000MW of generation capacity is sitting idle due to fuel shortage or short- and long-term maintenance: 5,132MW is lost for maintenance and 4,971MW for fuel shortage.

Of the 4,971MW sitting idle, 3,152MW is for want of gas, according to data from PDB.

If the PDB wants to run all the installed gas-fired power plants, it will require at least 1,959 million cubic feet of gas per day (mmcfd).

But for the past month or so, it has been getting about 950 mncfd after Cyclone Remal damaged one of the two floating storage and regasification units (FSRU), according to data from Petrobangla. The FSRU would not be operational before July 15.

Subsequently, 36 of the 70 gas-fired power plants are now out of service.

Before Cyclone Remal, PDB was getting about 1,300 mncfd, according to Petrobangla.

In the absence of an adequate gas supply for the power plants, the PDB was relying on coal-fired power plants. But those are generating below their capacity.

Of the three main coal-fired power plants, Rampal and SS Power are operating at half capacity at best, with only Payra in full run.

Then on June 25, the 1,496MW Adani coal-fired power plant in Jharkhand, India abruptly shut down for a technical glitch. The plant came back into operation only yesterday.

Subsequently, the PDB has to run the costly furnace oil-run power plants, which has been impacting the power generation cost, according to officials informed with the proceedings.

“We have enough power generation capacity and there should not be any more load shedding across the country. But we couldn't let that happen,” said Ijaz Hossain, a former professor at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology's department of chemical engineering.

There was about 1,000MW of load shedding in different parts of Bangladesh, according to data from the Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board, which supplies electricity to more than 70 percent of the subscribers, mainly in rural areas.

However, the PDB officials maintain the situation is stable.

“The weather is favourable [as the demand has dropped] – we hope the situation will not further deteriorate,” said Khandaker Mokammel Hossain, member (generation) of PDB.

The government always tries to cover up the actual situation, said M Shamsul Alam, energy advisor to Consumers Association of Bangladesh.

“Rather, they should admit the crisis and act accordingly,” he said.

The gas supply situation is as bad as ever and unexpected situations have arisen too, said Hossain, the former BUET professor.

“We have to use high-cost furnace

oil or diesel to keep the power supply normal and this is increasing the generation cost amid the dollar crunch. We had enough time to replace the high-cost fuel with renewables, but that did not happen. We need to rethink the whole situation more intensively,” he added.

The government was never able to import as much fuel required to the power plants to meet the country's demand, said Alam, also the dean of Daffodil International University's faculty of engineering.

“They have just raised the power generation capacity without proper planning or demand analysis, which was highly required. We didn't follow any standard practice – we have no policy either,” he said.

For instance, sending so many power plants into maintenance at once is unusual, he said, adding that there were times when overloaded plants were put into operation and scheduled maintenance was postponed to meet the demand.

All the maintenance works should have been pre-scheduled and in rotation.

“It should not be done when power demand is high... this is just an excuse. We couldn't pay the fuel bills. We couldn't pay the plants' bills due to the dollar crunch. We have only taken loans from the donors and cleared dues with bonds. In the upcoming years, the loans will be paid. What will be the situation then, I can't imagine.”

Public universities slip into turmoil

FROM PAGE 1

FBUTA Secretary General Nizamul Hoque said that they would request the prime minister to listen to their demands.

“The finance ministry has issued the circular [on the new pension scheme] and they might not amend it. So, we are requesting the prime minister to meet our demands,” he told The Daily Star.

Prof Zeenat Huda, general secretary of Dhaka University Teachers Association, said, “Why such a discriminatory pension scheme was imposed on the teachers suddenly? The teachers will never accept this.”

Staffers of the 35 universities under the banner of Inter University Officers Federation also continued work abstention yesterday demanding reinstatement of the previous pension system. This led to a halt in all administrative activities at those higher educational institutions.

Teachers have been demonstrating since May 26 protesting the government decision to include all officers and employees, joining the service of autonomous, self-governing, nationalised, statutory, or similar organisations and their subordinate institutions on or after July 1, 2024, under the Prottoy scheme.

University teachers said that under the current system, no money is deducted from their basic salary for pensions, whereas the new scheme

mandates a 10 percent deduction from the basic salary or Tk 5,000.

Teachers currently receive a one-time gratuity after going into retirement, but there is no mention of this facility in the new scheme. These two changes will eventually reduce the financial benefits of the university teachers who would join service on or after July 1, 2024.

Terming the new pension scheme discriminatory, teachers said that many people will not take up teaching at universities if the new scheme is implemented.

They also demanded a separate pay scale for university teachers and inclusion of professors in the pay grade equivalent to that of a senior secretary.

DEMO AT DU

All classrooms and libraries were closed at Dhaka University yesterday. Skipping classes and exams, teachers held a sit-in in front of the arts faculty building for about an hour.

Speaking at the sit-in, DUTA leaders said the teachers of 35 public universities have rejected the Prottoy scheme. They alleged that some vested quarters were spreading propaganda over the teacher's movement.

Addressing the demonstration, Nizamul rejected the explanation of the pension authority.

“We have logic behind our demands and the government will have to pay heed to it. We will accept our inclusion

in the Sebok scheme [to be launched next year for government employees] if it is made universal [for teachers and government employees],” he said.

The National Pension Authority issued a statement yesterday and said that the government will amend the retirement age-related provision of the Prottoy scheme.

Boycotting administrative activities, staffers under the banner of Dhaka University Karmakarta Karmachari Oikya Parishad took out processions on the campus yesterday. They also staged sit-ins in front of the administrative building and the central library.

In Barishal, at least 10 people were injured after two officers' organisations of Barishal University brawled over taking part in a human chain protesting the introduction of the Prottoy pension scheme.

Witnesses said officers under the banners of Direct Officers Association and Barishal University Officers Association exchanged heated words over standing in the human chain. At one stage, they scuffled and threw plastic chairs at each other.

No classes and exams were held at the DU, BUET, Rajshahi, Jahangirnagar, Chittagong, Jagannath and other universities. The university authorities either kept the transport service suspended or significantly reduced trips to and from campuses.

MPs blast govt for sorry state of banking sector

FROM PAGE 1

The lawmaker said the state-owned bank Janata Bank was dying and that the status of private bank NBL was poor.

Criticising the interest waiver, he said natural calamities, death of borrowers could be the reason for waiving interest. But nothing happened, not even a disaster. Interest has been waived on dubious and lame excuses.

Without mentioning the name of

former NBR official Matiur Rahman, Pankaj said the name of a controversial person is being discussed every day for his alleged corruption. One person holds three to four important positions. The controversy over his political identity started 15 years ago.

He enquired who recommended his name for these important positions.

While discussing the bill, JP MP Hafiz Uddin Ahmed said PK Halder had left for India with money. Many

Ex-additional IGP, wife own Tk 30cr

FROM PAGE 12

Shamsuddoha has been named in the two charge sheets, while Ferdowsi has been included in a charge sheet.

On November 21, 2019, ACC Deputy Director Shahin Mamtaj lodged a case against Shamsuddoha and another one against Ferdowsi, bringing allegations of hiding wealth information and amassing illegal wealth.

One of the two charge sheets said Shamsuddoha illegally acquired wealth worth Tk 2.87 crore and concealed wealth information worth 8.44 crore.

“Ferdowsi amassed wealth worth Tk 27.48 crore beyond known sources of income, while she concealed information of wealth worth 28.47

crore,” investigator Khorshed said in another charge sheet.

Shamsuddoha abetted his wife in her acquiring the illegal wealth, the investigator added.

He started his career as assistant superintendent of police on August 28, 1986. Shamsuddoha became an additional IGP in 2011 and worked as BIWTA chairman from September 1, 2011, to February 28, 2015, according to the probe report.

“During his service, the former IGP misused power and accumulated a huge amount of assets beyond known sources of income. His wife Ferdowsi has a huge amount of wealth though she is a homemaker,” it also said.

“Shamsuddoha claimed that he earned Tk 2.5 crore as salary, various allowances and from farming. He made a profit of Tk 1.5 crore after investing Tk 2.5 crore. He also got Tk 70 lakh from land sale. But he did not provide the ACC with any documents in favour of his claim,” the investigator mentioned in the probe report.

In one case, the investigator appealed to the court to issue an arrest warrant for Shamsuddoha.

His wife Ferdowsi is on bail. The charge sheets are likely to be placed before the judge of the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka today, a court staffer told The Daily Star yesterday.

GRAFT BY GOVT OFFICIALS

Cabinet secy to sit with secretaries tomorrow

BAHARAM KHAN

The cabinet division yesterday called a meeting with all government secretaries at 4:30pm tomorrow and allegations of corruption against government officials is likely to be one of the topics of discussion.

The meeting agenda encompasses five issues, including integrity and good governance, implementation of the electoral manifesto and the national budget.

An additional secretary, preferring anonymity, told The Daily Star, “The cabinet secretary wants strict measures against corruption and irregularities in the ministries and divisions. There are some examples of pardoning officials even after the allegations of corruption against them were proven. He may give specific directives on these issues.”

The meeting is taking place at a time when corruption allegations against government officials are widely discussed inside and outside the parliament.

Sources said the corruption issue is likely to dominate the meeting, which will be chaired by Cabinet Secretary Mahbub Hossain. They added that the Government Servant Conduct Rules 1979 is likely to be discussed.

JAILBREAK

Bogura jailer removed from post

removed from post

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

The jailer at Bogura District Jail, from which four death row convicts escaped briefly on June 26, has been removed from his post.

Jailer Faridur Rahman Rubel has been closed and attached to the DIG prison office in Rajshahi following an order of the Directorate of Prisons on Monday night, Anower Hossain, jail super of Bogura prison, told The Daily Star.

In Rubel's place, Syed Shah Sharif of Rajbari District Jail has been transferred to Bogura, said Anower.

Earlier, four prison guards, including Deputy Jailer Hosenuzzaman, were suspended for negligence in duty over the escape of four prisoners. A departmental case was also filed against three other prison guards.

Early on June 26, four death row convicts escaped by making a hole in the roof of a condemned cell. They were caught after one and a half hours by the police.

Two separate probe bodies are investigating the matter.