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Normalcy to return in a short time

Foreign minister tells diplomats about protests

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday assured foreign diplomats that the situation arising out of students' quota reform protest will normalise within a short time.

At a briefing at state guesthouse Jamuna, Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud told them that the government regrets the disruption to daily life caused by the recent incidents of violence.

He said anti-liberation, anti-state elements, and religious extremists perpetrated the violence infiltrating into the peaceful student protest for quota reforms in government jobs.

"The government understands the anxiety and concerns that might have surfaced among the diplomatic community and the inconvenience caused by interruption to internet connectivity and temporary movement disruption," he said.

Some 60 foreign diplomats and

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People queue up in front of the DPDC sub-station office on Satmasjid Road yesterday to recharge their prepaid electricity meter cards. Consumers have been suffering for the last three days as they cannot recharge the cards due to the internet outage.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

8 trade bodies throw weight behind govt

Denounce recent acts of vandalism, arson

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eight major business and trade organisations, including the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), have expressed their support for the government's steps to fight the criminals and evil forces that destroyed state properties.

The other organisations are Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Bangladesh Knit Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), Bangladesh Textile Mills Association, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), Chattogram Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) and Saarc Chamber of Bangladesh.

In a joint press release issued yesterday, the organisations expressed concern over the losses caused to the economy over the last few days due to the violence.

They feared that if the violence continued, it will further harm the economy, industrialisation, and job creation.

"In this situation, the business community fully supports the government for its steps against the criminals who destroyed state properties."

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PREPAID GAS, ELECTRICITY Users suffer amid internet outage

MD ABBAS and ASIFUR RAHMAN

Thousands of consumers across the nation are facing immense difficulties in getting their cards for prepaid electricity and gas meters recharged amid the ongoing internet outage and the curfew.

People were seen standing in queues for hours on end at power and gas supply offices yesterday. And after failing to recharge their cards, many returned to a home without power or gas or both.

Around 2.5 crore electricity consumers use prepaid meters across the country.

The owner of Rofrol Telecom, a shop on Tajmahal Road in Mohammadpur that provides prepaid card recharge services, said there are two types of machines

used for recharging prepaid electricity and gas meters. One requires internet and the other does not.

He said they are now having to resort to using only the top-up machine that does not require the internet.

Other vendors complained of having insufficient balance on their top-up machines as DPDC's designated agents could not provide them with credit for

the past few days amid the extended bank holidays.

Abdullah Noman, managing director of the Dhaka Power Distribution Company, claimed that they were providing recharge services from 26 zonal offices since Friday.

"As a huge number of people are rushing to the offices, they're having to wait longer. Besides, we've increased our emergency balance by Tk 3,000 to Tk 5,000 based on usage, which should be enough for a good number of days for most people," he said.

"We hope the internet services will resume by this time and if not, we will take further necessary measures," he added.

Md Hasib of Tajmahal Road had Tk 120 left in his meter on Thursday morning. He was going to recharge his card that evening but the internet outage happened before he could do so.

"I started feeling sick after standing in line in front of DPDC's Lalmatia office for two and a half hours today [yesterday]. Luckily, I found a shop on my way home from where I could top-up my prepaid card."

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Internet unlikely to be restored anytime soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday said they were working to restore the internet communication across the country but could not specify when the services would resume.

A number of communication infrastructures, including public and private data centres, came under attack during the violence surrounding the quota reform protests between Wednesday and Friday, said Zunaid Ahmad Palak, state minister for Posts, Telecommunications and ICT.

"Our engineers are now conducting repair works on the damaged equipment and internet services can resume after the repairs are done."

He made the remarks while speaking at a press briefing at the head office of Bangladesh Telecommunication and Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

Palak apologised for the temporary disruption and said the authorities were trying their best to restore

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150 arrested over recent violence

Several BNP, Jamaat leaders among them; Amir Khashru, Jamaat secy gen remanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 150 people, including leaders and activists of the BNP and Jamaat, were arrested in Dhaka and Gazipur yesterday in connection with recent violence.

The BNP claimed that at least five party leaders were held in the capital.

Law enforcers arrested BNP executive committee member Abdus Salam, adviser to party chairperson Amanullah Aman, International Affairs Secretary Nasir Uddin, Publicity Affairs Secretary Sultan Salahuddin Tuku and Organising Secretary Kazi Sayedul Alam Babul, said BNP media cell member Shamsuddin Didar.

"Many other BNP leaders have been arrested across the country," he told The Daily Star.

Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday arrested 74 leaders and activists of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami from different areas of the capital, DB chief Harun-Or-Rashid told reporters.

He said more suspects for the violence will be arrested soon. Gazipur police arrested 77 people from different areas of the district over attacking police stations and violence.

Nanda Lal, inspector (investigation) of Gacha Police Station, said police arrested 59 people from different areas in Gazipur over attacking the police station on Saturday.

Rafiul Karim, OC of Gazipur Sadar Police Station, said they held 13 people in connection with the recent violence.

Konabari Police Station OC AB Siddique said they held five over the recent violence.

In Savar, families of two BNP men alleged that police yesterday raided and ransacked their homes in Naybari and Chayabithi areas.

However, Dhaka Additional Superintendent of Police Abdullah Kafi denied the allegation.

Police in Pirojpur yesterday arrested Kaukhali upazila Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Nazrul Islam in Biraljhuri area around 3:30pm.

Humayun Kabir, officer-in-charge of Kaukhali Police Station, said Nazrul was arrested in a sabotage case filed previously.

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Chiefs of three services meet prime minister

UNB, Dhaka

Chiefs of three services met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday to discuss the current situation of the country.

The meeting started around 4:00pm at the Gono Bhaban.

The prime minister gave them necessary directives during the meeting, said PM's Deputy Press secretary KM Shakhawat Moon.

Chiefs of different law enforcement agencies and the PM's security adviser were also present.

The meeting took place at a time when the country is passing a tense time over violence centring the quota protests. Students of different universities and colleges have been demonstrating for around three weeks, demanding reforms to the quota system in government jobs.



Military vehicles manoeuvre inside Gaza as seen from Israel. Palestinians said a major Israeli operation was underway in the Saudi district of Rafah in the south.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Israel strikes Gaza, Yemen, Lebanon

64 more Palestinians killed in the Palestinian enclave; major Israeli operation underway in south of Rafah

AFP, Palestinian Territories

The Middle East was reeling from deadly violence yesterday with Israel bombing Gaza, Lebanon and Yemen in quick succession in response to attacks from Iran-backed militant groups.

The Israeli military said it intercepted a missile from Yemen, as it pressed on with its offensive in the besieged Palestinian territory.

Dozens have been killed since Saturday across the Gaza Strip, the civil defence agency said, including in strikes on homes in the central Nuseirat and Bureij areas and displaced people near southern Khan Yunis.

Residents said a major operation was underway in the Saudi district of Rafah in the south, reporting heavy artillery and clashes.

The deadly strikes in Gaza came hours after Hezbollah and its ally Hamas said they fired at Israeli positions from south Lebanon, while Yemen's Houthi rebels vowed to respond to Israeli warplanes hitting a key port.

The fire left raging by the strikes on rebel-held Hodeida port "is seen across the Middle East and the significance is clear," Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said.

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