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Restore internet, withdraw curfew Demands platform of university teachers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

University Teachers Network (UTN) yesterday called upon the authorities concerned to immediately withdraw the countrywide curfew and resume internet services to end public sufferings.

Due to the disruption, people are struggling to get essential services, the platform of public university teachers said in a statement.

The government imposed the nationwide curfew from early Saturday and internet services were also shutdown as scores were killed and many government establishments were torched and vandalised amid the clashes between law enforcers and protesters.

"Mindless killing of people has to be stopped now and those who have gone missing should be traced immediately," reads the statement.

The platform called for proper and non-partisan inquiry into the killings by a neutral probe body to be formed in line with different global human rights instruments.

It called upon everyone to not "dehumanise" the protesters and refrain from using any offensive words against

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BNP-Jamaat behind attacks, sabotage: Arafat

UNB, Dhaka

State Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mohammad A Arafat yesterday said BNP-Jamaat activists carried out attacks across the country as part of their well-thought and pre-designed blueprint to disconnect the country from the world and stop development efforts.

"Look at their dress-up, approach and attitude," he said, adding that even some of the attackers were drugged.

He was highlighting the extent of the destruction caused to the government properties at a views-exchange meeting between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the country's business leaders.

Arafat said BNP-Jamaat cadres are responsible for staging sabotage in the country while the attackers targeted general people and key establishments.

He said a solution is being found through discussion with students while curfew was imposed to check the attackers.

The government said the ill motive of the perpetrators was exposed when the coordinators of the quota protests made public statements denying any involvement in the indiscriminate violence, vandalism and arsons and called on all quarters not to take evil political advantage from their apolitical movement.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

SAUDI ARABIA-BOUND MIGRANTS

Stranded, they continue to suffer

RASHIDUL HASAN and JAMIL MAHMUD

Md Mahbul, a Saudi-bound migrant worker, was scheduled to fly for the KSA at 2:35am on July 19. However, his flight was cancelled due to technical issues caused by countrywide internet shutdown.

He was forced to stay overnight at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport as there was no arrangement from the authorities concerned for accommodation and food for the stranded passengers.

Like Mahbul, several hundred migrant workers had to face massive troubles at the Dhaka Airport due to cancellation or delay of flights of different airlines including Saudia, Air Arabia and Emirates in the last three days since Friday.

Many of the passengers got stranded at the airport or had to stay outside the airport as international flights were either delayed or cancelled due to a technical glitch related to global Microsoft flight data and lack of passengers amid road blocks by demonstrators and the curfew.

Mahbul, who came to Dhaka from

Pabna while suffering huge hassle on the road, said, "As there was unrest in different parts of the country, I didn't dare to go back to Pabna.



Instead, I decided to stay in Dhaka as I was not sure when my flight will be rescheduled."

Saiful, another Saudi-bound migrant, whose flight also got

cancelled on July 20, said, "We contribute to the country's economy with our hard-earned money. But the respective ministry or any other government authorities bothered little to look after us during this hard situation."

Sakibul Hasan of Bhola, another Saudi-bound migrant, said, "I have been at the airport for the last 16 hours to learn when my flight has been rescheduled. But neither the airlines authorities, nor airport authorities could give us any information."

"At the airport, I had to cross half a kilometre to get water and food while carrying my heavy luggage on my head, as there was no such arrangement at the waiting area outside the terminal," said a frustrated Sakibul.

Amid the sufferings of migrant workers, Aviation Minister Mohammad Faruk Khan on Saturday said for migrant workers, there were arrangements for food and accommodation at the Hajj Camp and the rest house of expatriates' welfare ministry at city's Ashkona.

But several migrant workers

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COUNTRYWIDE VIOLENCE Power sector incurs loss of Tk 1,000cr, DNCC Tk 205cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The power sector incurred a loss of at least Tk 1,000 crore during the violence centring the quota reform protest, said State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid yesterday.

He said the saboteurs were BNP-Jamaat men. The miscreants vandalised, looted or torched at least five power sub-stations in Dhaka and beyond.

Besides, Palli Bidyut offices in Narsingdi and Narayanganj were torched and vandalised.

When sufferings of people failing to recharge pre-paid meters without the internet were brought to his attention, he said the situation is improving.

"Zonal offices of the power distribution companies have been recharging the prepaid customers... They are working 24 hours... we have increased limit of the emergency balance," he



added.

Meanwhile, Dhaka North City Corporation incurred a loss of around Tk 205 crore in the unrest centring the student protest on quota reform on Friday and Saturday.

The city corporation said one-fourth of DNCC vehicles tasked with garbage management had been set on fire.

DNCC Mayor Md Atiqul Islam presented a primary estimation of their loss at a press conference held at Nagar Bhaban in Gulshan yesterday.

The mayor said most of the damages were reported from Mirpur-10, amounting to Tk 120 crore.

He said a footbridge at Mirpur-10 intersection, four garbage carrying compactors and 29 vehicles including 10 garbage carrying container carriers had completely been burnt on Friday and Saturday.

DNCC faced a loss of around Tk 3.10 crore in zone-1 and zone-5, Tk 1.25 crore in zone-3 and around Tk 7 lakh in zone-6.

Besides, LED lights, road medians and similar structures were vandalised in areas under DNCC, amounting to Tk 65 crore in damages.

Also, a storm sewage pump was damaged in Rampura, disabling DNCC to pump out additional water from Hatirjheel now, the mayor said.

3RD DAY OF CURFEW IN DHAKA

Free from violence but far from normal

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

After nearly a week of chaos, no incidence of violence or clash was reported inside Dhaka on the third day of curfew. People were seen heading to kitchen markets, grocery stores and paying utility bills.

Nasrin Akhter, a resident in Dhanmondi area, moved out to dump the household garbage into a garbage can located a few hundred metres away from her home.

"Cleaners and garbage collectors from the city corporation could not come to our building for the last five days due to clashes. Many of these wastes started to rot and stink. So, I came out myself to dump it into the local garbage container."

Although there was no violence on the streets, the situation was still far from normal. Most of the shops, shopping malls, restaurants, public places and offices were closed throughout the city. Public transport was absent like the previous days. App-based ride sharing services were closed as the internet shutdown is still in effect.

Very few private vehicles were plying the roads and people were using mostly rickshaws and battery-powered auto-rickshaws to move about. They said rickshaw-pullers were asking for exorbitant fares taking advantage of the situation.

Naimur Rahman was trying to go to Farmgate from Mohammadpur but failed to find any rickshaw. He said, "The usual fare should be Tk 80. But, rickshaw-pullers are asking Tk 140-150."

Although there was no violence on the street yesterday, people are now in fear of getting arrested as news of mass arrests made rounds on mainstream media.

Cleaners and garbage collectors could not come to our building for the last five days due to clashes. All these wastes started to rot and stink.

NASRIN AKHTER
A resident of Dhanmondi

Sadequr Rahman, a delivery man of an app-based company, said, "There are thousands of youth like me who are now sitting idle at home without any work due to curfew and internet shutdown. We have no income for a week and now we are passing days with extreme fear and anxiety as we are getting news of mass arrests."

Suraiya Akhter, a sales worker of a shopping mall in Farmgate, said, "The government should bring the country back into normalcy as soon as possible."



Two boys pass by a charred vehicle on a road in the capital's Rampura area yesterday afternoon during the three hours break of the ongoing curfew.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN