

ATTACK ON NUR

People will lose trust in judiciary if justice not served: Rashed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People will lose trust in the judiciary if justice is not served in the attack on Gono Odhikar Parishad President Nurul Haque Nur, Rashed Khan, the party's General Secretary, warned yesterday.

After meeting the judicial investigation commission at the Supreme Court's main building, the parishad leaders emphasised the need for transparency and accountability in the ongoing probe.

"The commission has already gathered evidence regarding all those present on the spot," Rashed told The Daily Star after the meeting.

On August 29, 2023, Nur was critically injured in Dhaka's Kakrail area. After clashes between activists of his party and the Jatiya Party near the latter's central office, police and army personnel reportedly baton-charged the crowd as Nur and his supporters prepared for a press conference, leaving him and over a hundred activists injured.

Nur sustained a severe head injury and a fractured nasal bone. He was first admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for 18 days. He was later flown to Singapore for advanced treatment on September 22. He underwent extensive tests and treatments at Mount Elizabeth Hospital for 12 days before returning home on October 4.

The government subsequently formed a three-member judicial commission, headed by a High Court judge, to investigate the incident and identify those responsible.

"Nur's health condition is a bit more stable now. He has been asked to go back to Singapore after four months for a check-up, and they will decide then if he needs a nasal surgery," said Rashed.

Rashed said his party men, who endured abuse during Sheikh Hasina's era, played a key role in paving the way for the mass uprising through the 2018 quota reform movement.



A girl sits outside one of the tents sheltering people displaced by war at the Qatari-built and now-damaged Hamad City residential complex in northwestern Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

US GOVT SHUTDOWN

No sign of deal as stalemate enters second week

AFP, Washington

The US government shutdown entered its second week yesterday, with no sign of a deal between President Donald Trump's Republicans and Democrats to end the crisis.

Democrats are refusing to provide the handful of votes the ruling Republicans need to reopen federal departments unless the two sides can agree on extending expiring health care subsidies.

With the government out of money since Wednesday and grinding to a halt, Senate Democrats looked set to vote against a House-passed temporary funding bill for a fifth time.

The hard line taken by Democrats

marks a rare moment of leverage for the opposition party in a period when Trump and his ultra-loyal Republicans control every branch of government -- and Trump himself is accused of seeking to amass authoritarian-like powers.

With funding not renewed, non-critical services are being suspended.

Pay for hundreds of thousands of public sector employees is set to be withheld from Friday, while military personnel could miss their first check on October 15.

And Trump has radically upped the ante by threatening to fire large numbers of government employees, rather than just furlough them, as has been done in every other shutdown over the years.

Republicans are digging in their heels,

with House Speaker Mike Johnson telling his members not even to come to Congress unless the Democrats cave.

Democratic House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries said that Republicans were the ones stalling any hopes of negotiations.

"Mike Johnson and House Republicans need to get back into town. Do your jobs. Democrats will be present," he told a news conference in New York Sunday.

Johnson -- who was due to address journalists at the US Capitol -- in turn blamed the Democrats' Senate leader Chuck Schumer.

"We need them to turn the lights back on so that everyone can do their work. The House did our work," he told NBC.

Talks begin to end Israel's war

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Gaza health authorities reported 19 people killed by Israeli strikes in the past 24 hours, around a third the typical daily toll of recent weeks when Israel has been mounting one of its biggest offensives of the war, an all-out assault on Gaza City.

Egyptian state TV reported that the talks had begun at the Red Sea resort of Sharm El Sheikh.

The talks commenced on the eve of the second anniversary of the Israeli assault on Palestinians in Gaza.

Since then, Israel's military campaign has killed more than 67,000 Palestinians and left the majority of 2.2 million Gazans homeless and hungry in the rubble of the enclave destroyed by relentless bombardment.

Egyptian sources said Hamas was seeking clarification of several details, including guarantees that Israel would follow through with promises to withdraw its troops from Gaza once the militants give up their leverage by freeing their hostages.

With Israeli forces blasting their way through Gaza City and flattening neighbourhoods as they advance, Gaza residents say a ceasefire now is their last hope that the enclave will emerge habitable.

"If there is a deal, then we survive. If there isn't, it is like we have been sentenced to death," said Gharam Mohammad, 20, displaced along with her family in central Gaza.

Inside Israel there is clamour for an end to the war to bring home hostages, although right-wing members of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet oppose any halt to fighting.

Most fertiliser plants starved of gas

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following the proposal to hike the gas price in the fertiliser category.

Currently, the per cubic meter gas price for fertiliser factories is Tk 16.

On August 10, Petrobangla applied to BERC to hike the price to Tk 40 per cubic meter.

The Technical Evaluation Team of BERC yesterday recommended that the new price be set at Tk 30.

The BERC will take public opinion until October 13 and announce the decision later.

Most of the invited organisations were absent from the hearing, while the Consumers' Association of Bangladesh (CAB) boycotted it.

If gas prices are increased, fertiliser prices will also rise in the aftermath, said M Shamsul Alam, CAB's energy adviser.

"Once fertiliser prices go up, agriculture will collapse, and we will have to import food -- the country is gradually turning into an import-dependent market."

In the interest of food security, the gas price for the fertiliser sector is typically kept low, he added.

In his submission, BCIC's Director (Planning & Implementation) Md Delwar Hossain said the authorities hiked the gas prices in 2022 with a promise to ensure uninterrupted supply.

But that commitment was not kept.

"Gas supply must be ensured. And if the price has to be increased, instead of raising it steeply, it could be increased from Tk 16 to Tk 20. That would still help protect the farmers."

Urea production has been declining since fiscal 2007-08 when the "gas rationing system" was initiated amid the gas shortage. Before that year, the local production was around 18 lakh tonnes.

Last fiscal year, local urea

production stood at about 10 lakh tonnes, 80 percent of which came from the Ghorashal-Palash plant. This means the other factories produce only 2 lakh tonnes of urea, he added.

"The import dependence has increased manifold and a huge amount of foreign currency is leaking because of this," he added.

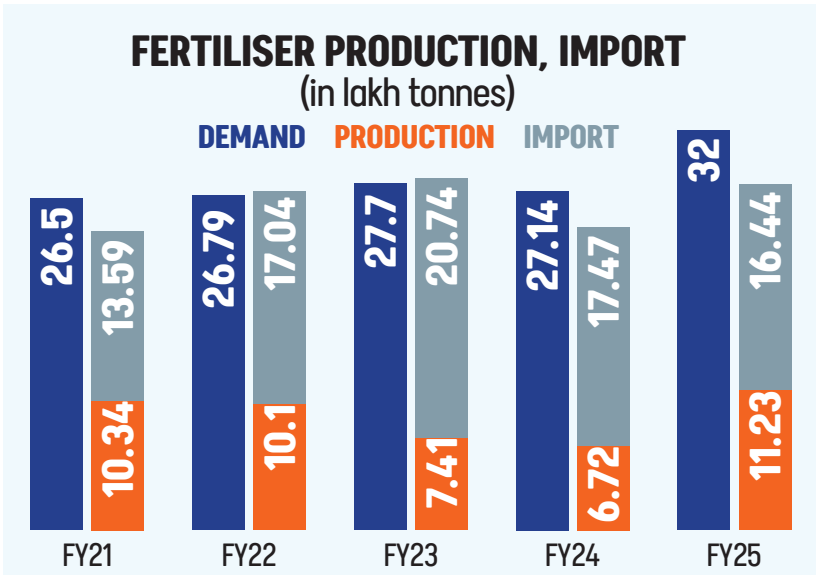
If the gas supply is ensured, the per tonne urea production would cost Tk 38,000, as per the BCIC's submission. It

of the agriculture ministry, also didn't oppose the recommendation of raising gas prices.

There is no decision to raise fertiliser prices at the retail level from the government, he said.

"If the government covers the increased production costs through subsidies, then the gas prices may go up," he added.

The fertiliser factories have a demand of 245 million cubic feet of gas



said the government pays Tk 13,000 as subsidies and they sell it to the dealers at Tk 25,000.

In fiscal 2024-25, the import cost for per tonne urea was Tk 56,547 and in fiscal 2023-24, Tk 51,418, according to data from the BCIC.

If the new rate is fixed at Tk 30, the production cost will be lower than the import cost.

Md Moniruzzaman, deputy secretary

per day (mmcf), while Petrobangla has provided an average of 116 mmcf.

If the price is hiked, it will not be possible to supply more than 181 mmcf on average, said AKM Mizanur Rahman, director (Finance) at Petrobangla.

"The increased price will help Petrobangla to reduce the cost deficit as the fertiliser sector pays less than the average cost of gas supply," he added.

BNP confident it'll win, form govt alone

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military-backed caretaker government. He was granted bail in September 2008 and left for London with his family for medical treatment, where he has since been living with his wife and daughter.

He said if he returns to power, he would pursue a "Bangladesh before all" foreign policy with India, which has historically favoured Sheikh Hasina's administration, seeking to reset what he called a "one-sided" relationship.

He also pledged that a new BNP government would break the cycle of retaliation, saying the party had already disciplined or expelled around 7,000 of its members for such actions since August last year.

The Financial Times noted that Tarique was evasive when asked

whether the Awami League, which is still thought to enjoy popular support, would be allowed to return to politics. "If they are convicted as criminals, then how can the Awami League... contest the election," he said, referring to leaders of the party facing criminal charges.

In his BBC Bangla interview, Tarique said, "For some valid reasons, my return hasn't happened yet. But I think the time has come. InshaAllah, I will return very soon."

Asked about security concerns surrounding his return, he said they have often heard apprehensions from many quarters.

On whether Khaleda Zia would play a role in the upcoming polls, he said, "If her physical ability allows, she will certainly play some roles."

Asked why he had not spoken to

the media for so long, Tarique said, "During the past fascist government, a court order stopped my right to speak. If I wanted to say something to the media, maybe the media wanted to publish it, but they could not."

In January 2015, the High Court ordered restrictions on publishing Tarique's statements. Another HC bench also ordered the government to immediately take steps to stop publication of Tarique's statements in print, electronic and social media as long as he is a fugitive.

On August 22 last year, the HC lifted the ban.

About the Jamaat e-Islami's controversial role in the 1971 Liberation War, he said, "If any political party had a controversial role during 1971, they will have to answer for that too. I can't answer. I can only answer for what I

have done, not others."

Asked if he considered himself the mastermind of the July movement, Tarique said he did not.

The uprising, he said, may have culminated in July but its roots stretched back years. He added that people from all walks of life -- not just political activists -- joined hands with democratic forces during the protests.

"The movement belonged to the people of Bangladesh," he said, adding that it was led not by any one party or individual, but by all who believe in democracy.

During the Awami League government, around 100 cases were filed against him, while he was sentenced in five in his absence.

After the fall of the AL government on August 5 last year, he was cleared of all charges through legal processes.

Army chief made no statement on giving indemnity: ISPR

'Conspirators' spreading disinformation online

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Inter Services Public Relations Directorate (ISPR) yesterday denounced what it described as a calculated smear campaign against the military, accusing certain social media users of deliberately distorting recent remarks by Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman.

In a press release issued yesterday, ISPR said the posts misrepresent the discussions of an event held on September 30, which focused on enhancing the operational effectiveness of army units deployed to assist the civil administration.

According to the statement, a research report was presented at the event exploring legal, administrative, and institutional challenges faced by army personnel deployed under the "In Aid to Civil Power" framework.

The discussion highlighted relevant provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), specifically sections 127-132, which govern the army's role in controlling unlawful assemblies and maintaining public order.

The session aimed to ensure that deployed forces fully understand and professionally apply these legal provisions.

ISPR noted that during the session, the issue of legal indemnity under CrPC Section 132 was raised.

The army chief addressed its implications and potential conflicts with the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, emphasising the need for legal safeguards for personnel acting under government orders. The army has already informed the relevant authorities about this concern.

ISPR clarified at no point did the army chief mention indemnity for individuals accused of enforced disappearances, killings, or crimes against humanity.

The press release accused a "known group of conspirators", particularly some individuals living abroad, of maliciously distorting the discussion and spreading disinformation to undermine public trust in the armed forces.

"The Bangladesh Army remains committed to the constitution, the rule of law, and its duty to the people," the statement read.

ISPR urged the public to remain vigilant against such disinformation and reaffirmed the army's dedication to professionalism and discipline.



India calls Hasina's stay

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Association, Bangladesh (DCAB), at the Indian Ministry of External Affairs and explaining the impacts of Hasina's presence on bilateral relations.

Responding to a question, Misri said they should set aside the perception that they have a favourite, or they are trying to engage with one set of people or ignore another set of people.

He said they want the earliest possible expression of the mandate of people through which a democratically elected government will emerge.

Asked whether India is trying to reinstate Hasina, Misri said they are only in favour of an early election in Bangladesh for an opportunity for the people of Bangladesh to express their mandate to the popularly elected government.

"We will deal with the government. We are prepared to deal with the government. I don't think there is anything else to say with regards to that."

MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, Joint Secretary (Bangladesh & Myanmar) B Shyam, DCAB President

AKM Moinuddin, and General Secretary Md Arifuzzaman Mamun were present during the interaction.

Meanwhile, Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain recently said Bangladesh is yet to receive any positive response from India regarding its request for Hasina's extradition to face trial at home.

"There is no new information on this. Bangladesh has asked India to return Sheikh Hasina to face trial. There has been no positive response from India yet," he told reporters in Dhaka recently.

Hasina fled to India amid a mass uprising on August 5 last year.

The adviser said Bangladesh is waiting for a response from New Delhi.

He added that Hasina's trial has already begun and whether someone comes or not, the trial does not stop.

During the interaction, the Indian foreign secretary also said they are ready to work with the democratically elected government following the results of an inclusive and participatory election.

A 23-member delegation of the DCAB is visiting India at the invitation of the Indian government.

Medicine Nobel for trio

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At the time, many researchers were convinced that immune tolerance only developed due to potentially harmful immune cells being eliminated in the thymus, through a process called "central tolerance".

Sakaguchi, 74, showed that the immune system is more complex and discovered a previously unknown class of immune cells, which protect the body from autoimmune diseases.

Brunkow, born in 1961 and a senior project manager at the Institute for Systems Biology in Seattle, and Ramsdell, a 64-year-old senior advisor at Sonoma Biotherapeutics in San Francisco, made the other key discovery in 2001, when they were able to explain why certain mice were particularly vulnerable to autoimmune diseases. "They had discovered that mice have a mutation in a gene that they named Foxp3," the jury said. "They also showed that mutations in the human equivalent of this gene cause a serious autoimmune disease, IPEX."

Two years later, Sakaguchi was able to link these discoveries. The trio will receive their prize -- a diploma, a gold medal and \$1.2 million split three ways -- at a ceremony in Stockholm on December 10.

Researchers from major US institutions typically dominate the Nobel science prizes, due largely to the US' longstanding investment in basic science and academic freedoms.

But that could change down the line following massive US budget cuts to science programmes announced by

President Donald Trump.

Since January, the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) has terminated 2,100 research grants totalling around \$9.5 billion and \$2.6 billion in contracts, according to an independent database called Grant Watch.

Thomas Perlmann of the Nobel medicine prize committee told AFP it was "no coincidence that the US has by far the most Nobel laureates".

"But there is now a creeping sense of uncertainty about the US' willingness to maintain their leading position in research," he said.

Trump has meanwhile made no secret of the fact that he wants to win a Nobel himself -- the Peace Prize.

Nobel experts have, however, said his "America First" policies and divisive style give him little chance.

"It's completely unthinkable," Oeivind Stenersen, a historian who has conducted research and co-written a book on the prize, told AFP.

"(Trump) is in many ways the opposite of the ideals that the Nobel Prize represents," he said, citing "multilateral cooperation" as an example.

Trump "follows his own path, unilaterally," Stenersen added.

Sudan's networks of volunteers Emergency Response Rooms (ERR) -- helping people survive war and famine -- are seen as a possible contender this year, as are media watchdogs the Committee to Protect Journalists, Reporters Without Borders, and Yulia Navalnaya, the widow of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.