



NEIR system to stay: govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday reiterated its stance on continuing the National Equipment Identity Register (NEIR) system despite protests by mobile phone traders.

The NEIR would not be suspended under pressure, said Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, special assistant to the chief adviser for posts, telecommunications and information technology.

“The government cannot give anyone a licence to commit crimes or engage in fraud,” he told reporters after visiting the headquarters of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) in the capital’s Agargaon.

Meanwhile, mobile phone traders said they would continue to keep their shops closed across the country unless their demands are met, said Shamim Mollah, senior vice president of the Bangladesh Mobile Business Community, an organisation representing mobile traders, many of whom sell unauthorised phones.

The traders’ demands include the withdrawal of cases filed by the BTRC against mobile traders, the release of those detained in connection with

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Police removing protesters from the street in front of Sonargaon Hotel in the capital yesterday, after mobile phone traders blocked the road as part of a nationwide shutdown to press home their demands, including the postponement of implementation of the National Equipment Identity Register (NEIR).

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Multiple protests halt traffic in capital

Key intersections blocked, causing citywide sufferings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Traffic in several key areas of the capital came to a near halt yesterday as separate protest programmes blocked major intersections, causing severe congestion and suffering for commuters.

Office-goers, students, and patients were especially affected as public transport movement was restricted, forcing many to walk long distances to reach their destinations.

Around 10:30am, mobile phone shop owners from across the country staged a sit-in and blocked the Karwan Bazar intersection as part of a nationwide shutdown over several demands, including the postponement of implementing the National Equipment Identity Register.

The traders had announced yesterday’s sit-in, which was joined by their families, on Saturday and declared an indefinite shutdown of mobile phone shops across the country.

Around 11:30am, police baton-charged the protesters to clear the roads. However, some of them returned around noon and resumed their demonstration, leading to chases between them and the law enforcers across the surrounding areas, including the Sonargaon intersection, near Bashundhara City Shopping Complex, Panthapath and Kathalbagan.

Police also used tear gas shells, sound grenades and a water cannon to disperse the protesters, witnesses said,

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LPG import hurdles may cause supply crunch

Traders tell govt

ASIFUR RAHMAN

The current supply of liquefied petroleum gas is sufficient to meet local demand despite difficulty in importing the fuel, importers said.

The country requires 14-15 lakh tonnes of LPG in a year, meaning the monthly demand is about 120,000 tonnes.

In December last year, traders imported about 127,000

➔ Traders blamed artificial shortages for recent price hike

➔ LPG imports rose to 1.27 lakh tonnes in Dec from 1.07 lakh tonnes in Nov

➔ Monthly LPG demand is about 1.20 lakh tonnes

➔ BERC fixed Tk 1,306 for the standard cylinder for Jan, up Tk 53

tonnes of LPG, about 21 percent more than the previous month.

This was disclosed by traders in an emergency meeting yesterday with the high-level officials of the ministry of power, energy and mineral resources, The Daily Star has learnt from people with knowledge of the discussions.

“The overall stock of LPG remains satisfactory,” said LPG Operators Association of Bangladesh (LOAB), the body representing LPG importers, in a statement after the meeting.

Subsequently, traders urged the government to take action against those who are manipulating the market by increasing prices in the name of crisis.

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NCP aims for 40 seats from Jamaat

29 finalised so far

SHAMIMA RITA and ARAFAT RAHAMAN

The Jamaat-led alliance has so far left 29 parliamentary seats for the National Citizen Party, but aspirants from other allies remain in the race in at least 21 of those constituencies, NCP sources said.

Candidates from allied parties have already opted out in eight constituencies to make way for NCP nominees, and talks are ongoing for a bigger share of seats.

NCP Joint Convener Sarwar Tushar said, “We are negotiating for 35 to 40 seats. Talks are ongoing, and we expect confirmation within two to three days.”

According to alliance sources, the eight seats where allied parties have withdrawn candidates for NCP include Dhaka-11, where party Convener Nahid Islam is set to run; Dhaka 8, earmarked for Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwary; Cumilla-4, where Chief Organiser (South) Hasnat Abdullah will contest; Rangpur-4, allocated to Member Secretary Akhtar Hossain; Panchagarh-1, finalised for Chief Organiser (North) Sarjis Alam; Kurigram-3, where Atik Mujahid has been nominated; Narayanganj-4, allocated to Abdullah Al Amin; and Noakhali-6, where Hannan Masud is set to contest.

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BNP rebels rattling allies

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Alliance partners have expressed deep frustration, as the BNP failed to rein in its leaders who are contesting the national election in seats allocated to allies, defying repeated warnings from the party high command and even after expulsion from the party.

At least a dozen alliance leaders told this correspondent that they are concerned as BNP leaders continue to run as rebel or independent candidates, undermining the seat-sharing arrangement.

They said they had expected active support from local BNP leaders and activists. Instead, the presence of them has confused voters, disrupted coordination at the grassroots, and weakened campaign efforts.

According to party sources, the BNP has shared 14 seats with its partners, including six seats given to leaders who joined the party.

Alliance candidates are now facing their main challenge from BNP rebel candidates rather than rivals from other parties.

Tensions are most visible in Bogura-2, where Nagorik Oikya President Mahmudur Rahman Manna alleged that a BNP candidate created “many problems and complications” during the nomination process.

Manna said that although the BNP high command had earlier encouraged him to contest from the seat, he faced organised

resistance when he went to submit his papers.

“On the day of nomination submission, not only the BNP candidate, but also district BNP leaders and almost all leaders of the lawyers’ organisations, along with lawyers brought from Dhaka, used their full strength to create a mob and oppose my nomination,” he said.

After overcoming those hurdles, Manna said he later found that those involved in obstructing him had been given BNP tickets.

He also claimed that the same nomination papers rejected in Bogura-2 were later accepted in Dhaka-18. “I will file an appeal and then make my next decision.”

Similar allegations have emerged in Jhenaidah-4, where Rashed Khan, who joined the BNP after resigning as general secretary of Gono Odhikar Parishad, accused supporters of a BNP rebel candidate of issuing threats and intimidation.

“Local BNP leaders and activists should cooperate with me, since I am a BNP-nominated candidate. But supporters of another BNP rebel candidate are threatening me. They are even creating obstacles when I try to rent an office to run my election campaign.”

He claimed that he has received death threats on social media and said he expects the party high command to resolve the matter.

Contacted, BNP Joint Secretary General Syed Emran Saleh Prince warned of strict

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Ziaul changed Rab tactics post N’ganj 7-murder

Says chief prosecutor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam yesterday told International Crimes Tribunal-1 that former Rab official Ziaul Ahsan allegedly changed the force’s methods of disposing of bodies after the Narayanganj seven-murder victims were found floating in the Shitalakkhya river.

After the incident triggered widespread public outrage, Ziaul ordered that bricks matching the victims’ body weight be tied to corpses before dumping them into rivers so they would not surface, Tajul said.

Citing the account of a victim of enforced disappearance, the chief prosecutor told the tribunal that a guard at the Task Force for Interrogation (TFI) cell where the victim had been detained revealed the instruction. The guard, Tajul said, spoke on a quiet night, burdened by guilt.

The guard also told the victim that as part of a plan to kill him, his weight had been measured about a week after his detention. The victim survived only because Ziaul was later transferred, Tajul added.

The prosecutor made the submission during the hearing on charge-framing against Maj Gen

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Rogue planet spotted drifting in space

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Scientists have spotted a “rogue” planet floating on its own through space.

Most of the planets we know are found orbiting as part of a star system. But some worlds, known as free-floating or rogue planets, drift through the universe independently, seemingly not attached to any

star system of their own.

These objects have been much more mysterious in part because they are far less bright than those other planets. One of the key ways of detecting other worlds, for instance, is spotting them as they move in front of their star – but, without a star, such rogue planets are much harder to see.

Now scientists have spotted one of those planets using a micro-lensing event, which happens when the gravity from an object magnifies the light from a star behind it.

And because that effect was seen from both ground- and space-based telescopes, astronomers were able to compare those different positions and use them to work out the mass of the planet.

It is roughly 22 percent of that of Jupiter, they say, and the planet is around 3,000 parsecs from the centre of our Milky Way galaxy.



Locals put on clothes on stray dogs of the neighbourhood so that they are a little comfortable during the cold spell sweeping over the country. The photo was taken from Nurjahan Road in Mohammadpur in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

5 held for tying woman to pole, pouring cold water on her

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have detained five people after a video showing a woman tied to an electric pole and having cold water poured on her in the capital went viral on social media.

Ali Ahmed Masud, assistant commissioner of Gulshan Zone, yesterday said the detainees were seen in the video and are currently being questioned.

“No case has been filed yet, as the woman has not been located so far,” he said, adding, “If we find her, we will be able to know what actually happened.”

According to the detainees, they apprehended the woman two days ago while she was allegedly trying to steal from a local madrasa in the Norda area, the police officer said.

Quoting the detainees, Masud said madrasa students were resting in their rooms at the time, and their clothes were on hangers. The woman allegedly went to the second and third floors of the madrasa and searched the pockets of the clothes.

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