

Fuel adjustment charge 'unjustified'

By A Staff Reporter

BOMBAY, April 23.

A MEMBER of the Kasbekar committee which inquired into the levy of fuel adjustment charge (FAC) in the electricity bills of consumers has, in a dissenting note, squarely blamed the Tata Electric Companies for the "unjustified" burden.

The member, himself a domestic consumer, refused to pay the FAC part of his electricity bill while promptly paying the basic tariff. He had raised several queries like on what basis FAC was charged, whether it was legal and if so how, but he had not received any reply from the suppliers. Bombay Suburban Electric Supply Company (BSES), it appears no action can be taken against the consumer for non-payment of FAC under the existing provisions of the law.

The Tatas seemed to have collected over Rs. 850 crores by way of FAC in the last 10 years from their consumers like BEST and BSES. The BEST and BSES have collected an additional Rs. 175 crores and Rs. 250 crores, respectively.

The majority view was that the Tatas answered all queries, the minority note observed that the collection of FAC was not proper. It reflected in the annual reports of the Tata Electric Companies. The FAC was reportedly distributed equally among all the companies of the Tatas, irrespective of the mode of power generation either hydro or thermal.

The member also opined that the auditing of FAC accounts of the Tatas was not satisfactory.

Following public outcry over the inflated bills and the empanelled FAC, the state government appointed a committee headed by a former chief secretary, Mr. P. D. Kasbekar. The committee's report submitted in November last has been accepted in principle by the state government.

The FAC rose from 6 paise per unit in 1976 to 48 paise per unit in 1984. While the Tatas charged 42 paise per unit, the BEST collected 48 paise and the BSES 46.20 paise as FAC. The MSEB charged 30 paise per unit. Significantly, after the appointment of Kasbekar committee, for about six months, there has been virtually no increase in the FAC.

Under the existing provisions of the law, electricity tariff could be revised only twice in a year and notice should be served six months in advance for effecting a change. The levy of FAC also appears to be illegal and it is currently under scrutiny.

tiny by the legal department of state government.

The major recommendations of the Kasbekar committee include: exemption of about 100 to 130 units from FAC for the domestic consumers; levy of 30 per cent less of FAC on domestic consumers and distributing the burden among the commercial consumers; strengthening of the government audit wing with additional staff to examine the FAC accounts of the companies and three months notice for any change in the FAC, by amending the electricity act suitably.

UNJUSTIFIED LEVY

Following the Kasbekar committee report, the state government is believed to be holding the view that the FAC as it existed was unjustified and the people should be given a relief. It also appeared to be concurring with the report which suggested strengthening of the audit machinery.

The minister of state for energy, Mr. Shivirao Deshmukh, who is committed to reducing the burden of FAC, is understood to be exploring all possible means to achieve this. The state government had already held meetings with the Tatas to impress upon them the need to reduce the FAC. In this connection, it is pointed out that the Tatas might be asked by the state government to use coal, which was at least four times cheaper than the oil or gas. The state government is likely to approach the centre to find a solution to the pricing of gas for power production. To combat the pollution caused by using coal, Tatas have reportedly acquired the necessary pollution control equipment.

Informed sources said the government would make an announcement in the next few days regarding the revision of FAC, based on the Kasbekar committee's report.

National safety awards presented

NEW DELHI, April 23: (PTI): The Union labour minister, Mr. T. Anjaiah, today asked industrial management to be more responsible and create greater awareness for adopting foolproof methods to prevent industrial accidents.

Presenting the Shramvir and national safety awards to 51 persons, Mr. Anjaiah said that while the government was taking measures to prevent major hazards in dangerous types of industries, the enforcing of laws cannot achieve results unless the management created conditions for preventing accidents.



The Karnataka chief minister, Mr. Ramakrishna Hegde, welcoming his Andhra Pradesh counterpart, Mr. N. T. Rama Rao, with a friendly hug at the Southern Zonal Council meeting in Bangalore at the week-end. The Union home minister, Mr. S. B. Chavan, who presided over the meeting, is looking on.

Maintenance for Muslim divorcee

NEW DELHI, April 23 (PTI): In a far-reaching significant judgment, the supreme court today held that a divorced Muslim wife was entitled to maintenance from her former husband under section 125 of the Cr. P. C. so long as she had not remarried.

"There is no conflict between the provisions of Sec. 125 and those of the Muslim personal law on the question of the Muslim husband's obligation to provide maintenance for a divorced wife who is unable to maintain herself," the court observed.

A five-judge constitution bench presided over by the chief justice, Mr. Y. V. Chandrachud, gave this ruling while dismissing an appeal of Mohd. Ahmed Khan who drove out his wife, Shah Bano Begum, in 1975, divorced her in November, 1978, and said he was under no obligation to provide maintenance for her as he had already paid maintenance to her at the rate of Rs. 200 per month during

the two-year period of 'iddat' and he had deposited a sum of Rs. 3,000 in the court by way of 'dower' during that period.

Mohd. Ahmed Khan, an advocate, married Shah Bano Begum in 1932. They had three sons and two daughters. In April, 1978, Shah Bano filed a petition against her husband under Sec. 125 Cr. P. C. in the court of the judicial magistrate (first class), Indore, asking for maintenance at the rate of Rs. 500 per month.

In April, 1979, the magistrate directed the husband to pay a sum of Rs. 25 to his wife as maintenance. His wife had alleged that her husband earned about Rs. 60,000 per year. On November 6, 1978, Mohd. Ahmed Khan divorced his wife by an irrevocable talaq.

On a revision application, the Madhya Pradesh high court in July, 1980, enhanced the amount of maintenance to Rs. 175.20 per month. The husband appealed against this before the supreme court.

seventeen temporary telephone connections have been set up at the corporation headquarters to receive messages from the 170 electoral wards. Coded messages have been devised so as to take up minimum time on the telephones, Mr. Afzalpurkar said.

The poll results will start pouring in by 8.30 p.m. on Thursday, he added.

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Remove Solanki, BJP tells Chavan

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI, April 23: The BJP has demanded the resignation of the Madhavsinh Solanki government in Gujarat and a judicial inquiry into police atrocities and other incidents, including attacks on newspapers and journalists.

A five-member delegation led by the party president, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, today met the Union home minister, Mr. S. B. Chavan, and expressed "shock and anguish" over the happenings in Gujarat. They contended that the state government had totally collapsed and demanded the resignation of the chief minister.

The team showed Mr. Chavan some pictures depicting Ahmedabad police indulging in vandalism and brutalities against women.

According to the BJP vice-president, Mr. S. S. Bhandari, who led an inquiry team of the party that went to Ahmedabad, a memorandum was given to the Gujarat chief minister demanding action against police officials guilty of misdeeds and proper compensation to the victims.

Talking to newsmen here today, he said the state government tried to break the peaceful agitation of students against its reservation policy by systematic use of police terror. Since April 20, the police had become the biggest menace to law and order, he alleged.

President to visit Zimbabwe, Zambia

NEW DELHI, April 23 (UNI): President Zail Singh will pay a state visit to Zimbabwe and Zambia from April 30 to May 8, it was officially announced here today.

Mr. Zail Singh will visit Zimbabwe from April 30 to May 4 at the invitation of President G. S. Banana. He will visit Zambia from May 4 to 8 at the invitation of President Kenneth David Kauanda.

Another NSA defunct, Manohar Theol, who was allegedly involved in cases of dacoity and rioting, is also fighting the election as an independent.

the state-owned Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Limited (IDPL). Mr. Singh was the Indian ambassador to Romania till recently.

GHALIB'S POEMS IN SWEDISH (UNI): "Diwan-ghalib", a collection of poems of the great Urdu poet, Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib, has been translated into Swedish.

The translation was done by well-known Urdu poet and journalist, Mr. P. K. Lakhanpal in collaboration with Swedish poetess, Ms. Ullah Palm. The first volume of the translation will be released in June.

Ghalib, who was poet laureate in the court of the last Mughul emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, is the second Indian poet whose works have been translated into Swedish.

SWAPO'S ENVOY (UNI): Mr. Matongo will be the first ambassador of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) in India, according to Ms. Margaret Alva, minister of state for parliamentary affairs.

Mr. Matongo, who has been the representative of SWAPO in India for the last three years, is likely to take charge of his new assignment in May.

The announcement was made at a public meeting organised by Indo-African friendship society on Monday.

50 hurt in Bangla bomb attacks

DHAKA, April 23 (Reuters): At least 50 people were injured today in bomb attacks across Bangladesh as candidates filed nomination papers for controversial rural elections, the police said.

Twenty people were wounded by bombs in the southern port of Chittagong and a total of 30 in other towns.

Among those hurt were three policemen hit by petrol bombs when they tried to break up a demonstration near an election office in the old part of Dhaka.

The police said the explosions were apparently aimed at stopping candidates from filing nomination papers.

A senior police official, who declined to be named, told Reuters that the attackers could be supporters of opposition parties trying to disrupt the election to 460 upazilas (sub-districts) scheduled for May 16 and 20.

Opposition leaders have called for a boycott of the polls, which they say are aimed at creating a power base for President Ershad.

One man was killed and several were injured in bomb explosions during an anti-government protest in Dhaka yesterday.

unable immediately to provide details about damage or any casualties.

Mr. Athulathmudali said that 28 people had died since Tamil-Muslim clashes started two weeks ago, according to official estimates.

Officials reported from the eastern area that some Tamils fled yesterday to the east coast city of Batticaloa about 10 km away.

SEPARATE STATE

The clashes started after three Muslims were shot dead by Tamil militants in northwestern Mannar more than two weeks ago. The militants are campaigning for a separate state in the north and east of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Devanayagam and another Tamil cabinet colleague, Mr. Chelliah Rajadurai, minister for regional development, yesterday apposed President Jayewardene of the situation following a visit to the troubled area.

The home minister said they stressed the need to restore normalcy as quickly as possible.

It is estimated that nearly 12,000 people have been made homeless in the violence, and that about 800 homes and shops have been destroyed or damaged.

PTI adds: Leaders of Sri Lanka's Buddhist and Hindu organisations met for two days this weekend at the ancient temple city of Kandy to create a better understanding between these two main religious groups and help solve the ethnic problem.

A 15-member delegation of the recently-formed council of Hindu organisations, under the leadership of its president, Mr. Yogendra Duraiswamy, met the Mahanayagam of the Malwate Asprigya chapters, the two main Buddhist organisations, on April 20 and 21 and held "free and frank" discussion on the ethnic issue.

Meanwhile, the U.S. state department is reported to have informed travel agents in the country that Sri Lanka is unsafe for travel due to the Tamil-Sinhala ethnic problem and the resultant violence.

The Sri Lankan government has granted permission for the visit, said.

150 for Pak shrine

NEW DELHI, April 23 (UNI): A group of 150 pilgrims will visit Sri Katarast, a Hindu shrine in the Jehlum district of Pakistan, a Hindu Rashtriya Sangathan release said today.

The Pakistan government has granted permission for the visit, said.

Khalistan slogans greet Fernandes

LONDON, April 23 (PTI): Slogans in support of "Khalistan" were raised at a gurdwara in London after Mr. George Fernandes, former Union minister, strongly criticised the Indian government's policy on Punjab during an address to the congregation, according to the gurdwara authorities.

Mr. Manjit Singh Sethi, president of the management committee of Shepherd's Bush gurdwara quoted Mr. Fernandes as having stated that what had followed Mrs. Gandhi's assassination was not rioting because riots involved two communities. What had happened was a deliberate attack on Sikhs organised by the ruling party.

Lebanese forces begin pull-out

BEIRUT, April 23 (AP): Christian militiamen pulled out of hill top positions east of Sidon today after 25 days of battles with Muslim fighters, but a planned evacuation by boat to Beirut was delayed by high seas, Christian officials reported.

Most of the 350 fighters of the Maronite "Lebanese forces" around the southern city were regrouping near Jieh, 10 km north of Sidon, following the 11 a.m. withdrawal, said an official at the militia's Beirut headquarters.

The guns were silent in Sidon for the first day since March 29 when fighting flared up between the Christians and an alliance of Muslim and Palestinian guerrillas.

The Christian pull-out began as Lebanon's Muslim leaders met in Damascus in a fresh bid to settle the intercommunal feuding that has split Muslim militias in Beirut.

The Lebanese forces' withdrawal followed a surprise cease-fire announced by their commander, Samir Geagea, in Beirut yesterday.

Victory will be ours: Arafat

DHAKA, April 23 (UNI): The Palestine Liberation Organisation chairman, Mr. Yasser Arafat, said today that the Palestinian struggle would continue till "final victory" and expressed confidence that it would be achieved soon.

"Insha Allah, we will pray soon in the holy mosque of Al-Quds al-Sharif," Mr. Arafat told reporters at Zia International Airport before leaving Dhaka.

Tamil homes burnt in Lanka

COLOMBO, April 23 (AFP).

MUSLIMS set Tamil homes ablaze yesterday, officials said here today as they reported further sectarian violence in eastern Sri Lanka which has already claimed around 50 lives, according to unofficial reports.

The home minister, Mr. Bill Devanayagam, said violence erupted in Muslim dominated Kathankudiy and an adjoining villages as Tamil homes were set on fire.

The national security minister, Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, confirmed that clashes had broken out, but was

3 anti-apartheid leaders held

JOHANNESBURG, April 23 (AD): Security police detained without charges three leading anti-apartheid campaigners this morning, a day after President P. W. Botha accused their organisation of seeking a violent revolution to end white-minority rule, the police said.

A police spokesman in Pretoria said the three were leaders of the United Democratic Front, South Africa's largest multi-racial organisation working to dismantle apartheid.

Presumably the three are to be held along with 16 other front leaders imprisoned and awaiting trial on unspecified charges of treason.

150 for Pak shrine

NEW DELHI, April 23 (UNI): A group of 150 pilgrims will visit Sri Katarast, a Hindu shrine in the Jehlum district of Pakistan, a Hindu Rashtriya Sangathan release said today.

The Pakistan government has granted permission for the visit, said.

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The Pakistan government has granted permission for the visit, said.

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"Tohra owes Takht an apology"

CHANDIGARH, April 23 (UNI): The Punjab Congress Chief whip Mr. Birdevinder Singh today held SGPC chief, Mr. Gurcharan Singh Tohra responsible for the circumstances which led to the launching of "Operation Bluestar" at the Golden Temple complex in June last year and said he owed an apology to the Sikh Panth for it.

Addressing a news conference here, he urged the Akal Takht chief to call for an explanation from Mr. Tohra in this regard.

Mr. Birdevinder Singh was reacting to the statement by Mr. Tohra yesterday that the Akal Takht would be demolished and rebuilt.

Mr. Birdevinder Singh said Mr. Tohra should explain to the Sikh masses in which capacity Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who headed only a Sikh sect, was allowed to operate from the Golden Temple and Akal Takht. He should also explain whether Bhindranwale was authorised by the SGPC to launch his morcha from these places and if so whether there was any provision in the SGPC Act for granting permission for such a morcha.

Challenging the authority of the SGPC to demolish the Akal Takht, Mr. Birdevinder Singh said the SGPC was only a management committee to look after Sikh shrines and it was

not within its powers to demolish any of these.

He said the Akal Takht was handed over to SGPC representatives and the jathedars of the Akal Takht after repairs and was accepted by them in its present shape.

Meanwhile, in Indore, Akali Dal (Fara Singh) president, Mr. Rachhpal Singh has called upon the Akali leaders released recently, to help create an atmosphere of faith and confidence in Punjab, instead of making "controversial" statements, which would do no one good.

London (PTI): Separatist Sikhs have once again organised broadcasts from Europe, beginning tomorrow, despite the cancellation of the programmes of so-called "Khalas Voice" by Radio Luxembourg last month.

Elaborate arrangements have been made and security personnel have been deployed in extremist infested areas in the Masaurhi constituency and the borders have been sealed on Nalanda district.

The Lok Sabha byelections are for Baramati in Maharashtra, Tiruchendur

in Tamil Nadu and Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir. The 26 assembly seats include four in Rajasthan, three in U.P., five in Bihar, three in West Bengal, three in Orissa and two in Karnataka.

In Bihar, nearly 650,000 voters will exercise their franchise to elect five legislators, out of 117 aspirants vying for Bokaro, Hata, Nalanda, Masaurhi and Latchar seats.

In U.P., 82 candidates are in the fray in Phulpur, Bilgram and Bareilly assembly constituencies.

CSE directive to normalise trading

The Times of India News Service

CALCUTTA, April 23: The Calcutta Stock Exchange (CSE) authorities have directed members-brokers to reduce their volume of business (bof, sales and purchases) to the extent of at least 20 per cent of their business position as on April 9. This directive takes effect from the next carry-over position which begins from April 25.

In an earlier directive, the authorities have allowed fresh purchases and sales in respect of 21 specified shares without obtaining prior permission. The members are, however, asked to deposit 3 per cent daily margin over and above 3 per cent carryover margin for those shares.

Wife refused bail in spouse's murder case

NEW DELHI, April 23 (UNI): The additional sessions Judge, Mr. V. S. Aggarwal, yesterday denied bail to one Dhan Kaur alias Dhanno, accused of murdering her husband in collusion with her brother Rakesh.

It was her second bail plea. Her first plea was rejected earlier this month.

She said she had been falsely implicated in the case. Her husband Suresh's body was found on March 20. The post mortem report revealed that the deceased was murdered a week before his body was recovered. Dhanno had lodged a report with the Moti nagar police station that he was missing.

Mr. Aggarwal in his order observed that in view of the gravity of the crime he was not inclined to release her on bail at this stage of the investigation.

Newsman condemn attack

NEW DELHI, April 23 (PTI): Editors, journalist organisations and newscamers' associations today severely condemned the brutal attack on newspaper offices and journalists in Ahmedabad yesterday.

Deploping what they called police brutalities on the press, the representative bodies urged