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BGMEA to go to court over polls deferral

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The members of the executive committee of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), at an emergency meeting yesterday, decided to go for legal action against the order by the ministry of commerce deferring the date of election to the executive body.

The two platforms of the owners--Forum and Sammilito Parishad--held a joint meeting last night and discussed the pros and cons of the government order.

The garment owners also consulted with legal experts about the government order. The legal experts termed the order issued by the ministry of commerce "illegal and out of its jurisdiction".

According to the legal experts, the director of trade organisation (DTO) cannot interfere in the election of a trade organisation after the announcement of the election schedule. The legal experts have said that BGMEA members would get justice if they go to the court, according to meeting sources.

There was also indirect pressure from various government circles to prevent legal action against the order.

BSF men face charge for rape of Bangladeshi woman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Kolkata police have charged some Border Security Force (BSF) personnel with rape of a Bangladeshi woman at their Sonadala border camp, said a BBC report last night.

According to the BBC, the Basirhat police station yesterday sent the woman for medical examination.

The woman along with her husband and two daughters were crossing the Khojadanga border of Bangladesh to Kolkata for treatment.

The 122 battalion of the BSF patrolling the Ichhamoti Bridge intercepted and detained the family.

Some BSF men then reportedly raped her and threatened to kill her husband and children if she resisted.

Circle Inspector of the Basirhat station Ziaur Rahman told the BBC over telephone that a case had been filed and that the no BSF personnel had been identified yet.

Star Chittagong

Due to unavoidable circumstances, our Star Chittagong page could not be published today. It will come out tomorrow.

DCs, police supers to face music for crime relapse

PM warns at local administrators conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has said local administration should be accountable for any law and order downside.

"The deputy commissioners (DCs) and the superintendents of police (SPs) should shoulder the responsibility in case of law and order failure. There should be strong coordination between civil and police administrations for

improvement of law and order," she told a conference of the DCs at the Secretariat yesterday.

Khaleda said the army-led countrywide crackdown on criminals has markedly improved law and order and brought relief to people. "The situation has to improve further and police and civil administrations ought to be more active to contain crime and violence."

The prime minister also asked the DCs to extend maximum support to the Election Commission to ensure free, fair and peaceful Union Parishad elections.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party-led four-party alliance has rode on public expectations for a crime-free society to a landslide in the general elections, she said. "The government is determined to live up to their expectations."

In this regard, she said the administration runs on people's money and should therefore be accountable to people. "Discharge your duties with utmost sincerity without any fear or favour."

Khaleda talked tough on truant officials at the district and upazila levels. "The government will not hesitate to take tough action against those who remain absent from their

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

China trade talks run into supplier's credit glitch

SHARIER KHAN

Two major Chinese projects on supplier's credit have apparently fallen by the wayside as the Dhaka-Beijing trade talks during Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's recent visit to China came to an anti-climatic end.

The projects - 210MW Khulna thermal power plant and development of North Dhaka (East) Sewerage Treatment Plant - were expected to be finalised and three others revised or scrapped at the talks, sources on the Bangladesh delegation said.

Both the projects made their ways to the top under the "Supplier's Credit Processing Policy and Procedure" of the government.

When Khaleda left for China, the projects, already approved by the planning ministry and the Economic Relations Division (ERD), were awaiting the finance ministry clearance.

Among the three others, the Dhaka-Beijing talks were supposed to give a fresh direction to an over-inflated Pagla Water Treatment Project.

The Karnaphuli Paper Mills rehabilitation project was to be scrapped, with the government decided on the sell-out of the mills to private buyers.

The government has also decided to scrap the di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) fertiliser factory project although it signed an agree-

ment with a Chinese company to set it up. The talks were to decide on a Dhaka request to divert the DAP fund for a different project.

These projects were incorporated into the agenda as a follow-up on several memoranda of understanding (MOUs) signed during Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji's visit early last year.

At the economic and technical cooperation meeting in Beijing, Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman argued that all these projects should be renegotiated, as some of them were not favourable to Bangladesh. Saifur, who headed the Bangladesh delegation, was a

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



PHOTO: STAR

Activists of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) sport placards against price hike of fuel, gas and water during a human chain in front of the Muktagong in the city yesterday.

IGP brushes aside EC fears

NAZRUL ISLAM

Brushing aside the fear of the Election Commission (EC) and its field-level officials, two top government officials yesterday said law and order is quite normal for holding peaceful union parishad elections.

Local Government Division Secretary AYBI Siddiqui and Inspector General of Police Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury yesterday told field-level election officials during their training at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre that law and order has improved a lot due to the joint drive and the existing situation is conducive to holding free and fair polls.

"There is nothing to worry about minor incidents," the IGP told the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Mercury dips to 5°C in Dinajpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After about a week the cold situation in Dhaka improved yesterday. But in some parts of the northern region the weather deteriorated while the mild cold attack elsewhere in the country remained unchanged.

The met office forecasted the weather to remain unchanged for two more days. "Temperature of Dhaka would increase during the day but may decrease at night," forecasting officer Abdul Mannan predicted.

The highest temperature of the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

Treatment trap

Brokers lure DMCH patients away to clinics

SHAMIM ASHRAF

A gang of brokers lure patients from Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) promising better treatment and land them in dire situations at private clinics, often leading to death.

There are about 12 private clinics near the DMCH where patients are lured to.

A Daily Star investigation revealed that most of the clinics have neither legal documents nor any trained doctor, nurse or anaesthetist to perform operation. Authorities of some of the clinics said they have applied for registration.

A section of dishonest officials of the health directorate are involved in this dangerous game of playing with life, sources said.

On average, about 50 patients go to the DMCH out-patient department (OPD) every day for consultation or admission for delivery, surgery or treatment of burn injury and another over 100 go to the emergency. But most of them fall in the hands of brokers.

A nuisance like dragging a patient away from the DMCH emergency is not an uncommon scene, the sources said.

"This is an everyday affair here and we dare not resist the organised syndicate," said a security guard at

the emergency.

After grabbing, the brokers huddle the patient into a waiting ambulance to take him to a nearby clinic.

Each broker usually makes out Tk 4000 to 6000 a month as commission from the clinics. The commission is about Tk 200 for a delivery patient and Tk 500 to 1000 for general surgery like hernia, cleftlip and minor burn.

Seeking anonymity, a broker said, "We have a gang leader and have to pay a small amount of our commission everyday. This varies from person to person but on average it is Tk ten to twenty per patient."

He said, "Our leader maintains link with a section of DMCH doctors and private clinics. Police are also bribed".

There are beautiful signboards at the entrances of the clinics showing names of reputed doctors and surgeons, who never go there.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



Saleem Samad



Tofail Ahmed

Detention of Tofail, Saleem Illegal: HC

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday declared illegal the detention of Awami League leader Tofail Ahmed and journalist Saleem Samad.

A division bench comprising Justice M A Aziz and Justice Mohammad Nazrul Islam Chowdhury declared illegal the detention of Tofail Ahmed, who was arrested on December 8, 2002. He was later put under detention.

Another division bench comprising Justice Mohammad Hamidul Haque and Justice Salma Masud Chowdhury declared the detention

of Saleem Samad illegal.

Samad was arrested on November 29 in connection with a sedition case. He was put under detention on December 24.

Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud along with Advocate Yousuf Hossain Humayun appeared for Tofail Ahmed while Barrister Amirul Islam for Saleem Sadad.

Additional Attorney General Fida M Kamal, and Assistant Attorneys General Zaman Akhter Bulbul and Gias Uddin Mithu stood for the state.

Meanwhile, the detention of

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3