

CEC takes new colleagues to meet EU team

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz, accompanied by the two new election commissioners loyal to him, met a high-profile European Commission (EC) delegation on Monday while keeping in the dark the other two commissioners.

Officials at the Election Commission Secretariat termed the meeting a secret matter. They said most of the officials knew nothing about it.

The CEC who had controversially avoided meeting the European Union troika in January for illness this time asked election commissioners Justice Mahbubur Rahman and SM Zakaria to attend the meeting.

The two senior election commissioners—M Munsef Ali and AK Mohammad Ali—were not informed of the meet.

"I didn't know anything at all about the meeting. I learnt about it only after going through newspaper

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Govt offers talks to form committee

Opposition hails the dialogue move over reform proposal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ice finally started melting as the government has offered dialogue with the opposition on the formation of the prime minister-proposed committee comprising leaders from the ruling and opposition parties to discuss the opposition's reform proposal.

Instructed by the prime minister, Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday talked to the deputy leader of the opposition and the opposition chief whip and conveyed the proposal for a formal discussion on the issue.

The proposed dialogue will be on the formation of the committee that will discuss the proposals for

reform in the caretaker government system and the Election Commission.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on February 28 in her valedictory speech of the last parliament session, proposed to form the committee, without specifying whether it will be a parliamentary committee or a body comprising political leaders.

The Awami League-led 14-party opposition combine termed the prime minister's proposal 'vague'.

After two weeks of the prime minister's proposal, the chief whip yesterday made a phone call to Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid and proposed to sit in a formal discussion with the oppo-

sition to form the committee. The proposal was given again to Abdul Hamid after the Namaz-e-janaza of BNP lawmaker Abdul Mutalib Akhand at the south plaza of the parliament.

When contacted, Delwar Hossain said they are waiting for the reply of the deputy leader of the opposition. If the opposition accepts the offer, the two sides will then discuss the formation, mandate and terms of reference of the committee.

"We don't want to send a letter [inviting the opposition] right now, but if the opposition wants we can send one," the chief whip told The Daily Star.

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Rab tipped off by landlady's family member

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A hint from a family member of the landlady of the Bishnupur house that was used as a JMB den helped Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members to launch Monday's successful yet bloody operations.

The Rab members, who went to raid the house, wanted to return after hearing that an auditor of Yamaha Company was residing there as a tenant with his wife, two children and a brother-in-law.

"As the law enforcers prepared to leave, I said that two colleagues of the tenant were supposed to come to the house soon. Hardly

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The bomb was in Omar's bandoleer

Says Rab expert

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The wife of JMB explosives expert Shakil alias Mollah Omar blew up herself and her two children exploding a powerful bomb packed in a bandoleer fastened to her waist, said a Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) expert.

"The extent of damage caused by the explosion and injuries to Shakil's wife Shahida suggest that the bomb was very powerful," Rab explosives expert Captain Mirza

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Nizami's book found at JMB dens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday recovered several jihadi books, including one written by Jamaat Ameer Matiur Rahman and Minister of Industries Nizami, from Comilla JMB dens.

The elite anti-crime forces raided two houses -- the Jannatul Shafi and Rousan Villa -- at Kaliajuri and made the recovery, which includes flask bomb,

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MILITANT DENS IN COMILLA

Cops probing if house owners linked to JMB

SHARIFUL ISLAM, back from Comilla

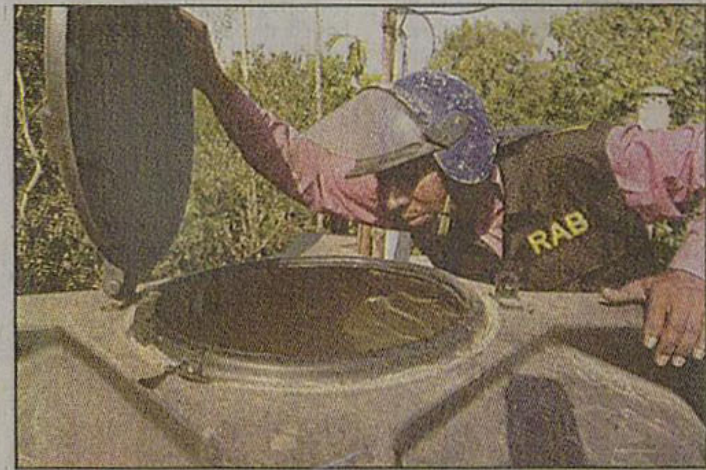
Comilla police are now investigating whether the owners who rented their houses to JMB militants have links to the Islamist outfit.

Police sources said they are also trying to find out if any locals mediated renting out houses to JMB men. If any one did so, he will be arrested.

"We have already interrogated owners of the three houses where JMB men were hiding," said a police official preferring anonymity. "If the house owners are found to have links to JMB operatives, they will be arrested and cases will be filed against them."

Meanwhile, police yesterday filed five cases against eight accused including JMB's absconding

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A Rab member peers into a rooftop water tank in search of any hidden arms or explosives at Jannatul Shafi, a Comilla JMB den in Kaliajuri, yesterday.

Rab goes all out to nab 2 JMB Shura men

STAR REPORT

The law enforcers have launched a massive hunt in the capital and some other districts for JMB Majlish-e-Shura member Khaled Saifullah who narrowly escaped Rab dragnet in Comilla Monday.

The search has been stepped up particularly in Dhaka as two of the seven people arrested in Comilla had told the Rapid Action Battalion

(Rab) that Saifullah left for Dhaka Sunday morning.

Meantime, Rab members, on information that Saifullah and Salahuddin, the other JMB Shura member on the run, were hiding in Khulna, raided different parts of the southern district yesterday, but to no effect.

The home ministry is learnt to be considering taking up a countrywide campaign to discourage

the landlords from renting out houses to the two heavyweight militants, said sources.

"Of the detained militants, so far all were captured from rented houses. And that's why faces of the fleeing Shura members need to be made publicly familiar by publishing posters like it was done before for militant chief Abdur Rahman and his lieutenant Siddiqui Islam

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JCD goes on rampage at Eden college

DU CORRESPONDENT

At least 12 students of Eden University College were injured yesterday as Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadres attacked the demonstrating students who had been blockading the street in front of the campus since Monday afternoon to realise their six-point charter of demands.

The JCD cadres unleashed their attack allegedly under direct police protection and in presence of the authorities.

All the residential students were bound to leave the dormitories by 1:30pm yesterday. A sudden decision by the authorities on Sunday to vacate the dormitories and suspend the classes put the residential students in an unforeseen hardship as practical examinations and vivas on different subjects for several sessions had been going on.

The authorities on Monday

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Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal cadres maul a student of Eden University College demonstrating in front of the campus against Chhatra Dal's domination. The scuffle in the city yesterday left several students including two Chhatra Dal members injured.

US envoy for probe into militant sponsors

Hails capture of JMB top brass

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

US Charge d' Affaires Judith Chammas hopes that police investigation into JMB continues to progress and that it will shed light on whether any elements of the outfit were involved in other acts of high profile violence in Bangladesh.

"Bringing to justice in a transparent and lawful manner all of the organisers, sponsors, perpetrators of all acts of extremist and political violence remains the paramount goal for anybody concerned with the security and future of this country," she told a press conference marking the inauguration of American Week at Hotel Agrabad here yesterday.

Welcoming the capture of top JMB leaders Abdur Rahman and

Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai, she said, "It is an important step forward in the government's response to the JMB's campaign of terror."

Asked about her observation regarding the alleged involvement of Jamaat-e-Islami and some ruling BNP leaders with the JMB, Chammas said allegations of having link with the banned militant outfit were also made against some other parties. So investigations should be made into all these allegations, she said.

Chammas said the priority of the American government is to work with Bangladesh closely to counter terrorism what she said was a threat to all.

The charge d' affaires said support to democracy is one of

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Dhaka to host Safta meet April 20

REZAUL KARIM

Dhaka will host the first meeting of the South Asia Free Trade Area (Safta) Council of Ministers (SMC), which will review and finalise the Safta implementation arrangements on April 20, official sources said.

The SMC meeting will review the progress towards launching of trade liberalisation programme (TLP) under the Safta agreement with effect from July 1, 2006 among the contracting states.

Commerce and trade ministers from the seven member countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) -- Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka -- will attend the meeting.

For Nepal, the date for launching of the TLP has been agreed for August 1.

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Islami Bank given 10 days to explain militants' accounts

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday served a show-cause notice to the chief executive of Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd concerning the alleged irregularities in maintaining 'militant-linked' accounts and asked him to reply within 10 days.

The central bank also sent the probe report of the BB inspection teams to the home ministry. The report was prepared after the teams examined a few cases of transactions in the bank suspecting they might have links to the militants.

Following the arrest of militant kingpin Abdur Rahman and seizure of some banking documents from his busted Sylhet hideout, five

BB teams probed three branches of Islami Bank, and one each of Rupali and Janata Bank.

The probe teams found some lapses in banking norms and suspicious transactions with the Sylhet, Gazipur and Savar branches of Islami Bank, sources said.

The show-cause notice was served under section 19 of the Anti-Money Laundering Act on the basis of the probe teams' report, a BB source said.

The three branches of Islami Bank violated some of the regulations specified in the Anti-Money Laundering Act, specially the section called 'Know Your Customer (KYC)'.

Despite the fact that there were

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WORKING UNSAFE

Sitakunda ship-breaking yard workers' death trap

1 worker injured a day, 1 killed a week, finds survey

PINAKI ROY

The air here is pungent with fumes and smells of burnt gas and oil. The ground is littered with bones and disjointed skeletons of every kind of ships with barefooted workers

moving about like swarms of scavenging ants. This 5km strip by the bay looks like a graveyard of vessels, not a bit like the tourist-attracting beach it was before 1985.

This seaside land-strip near the port city is now popularly known as

Sitakunda ship-breaking yard. A number of derelict ships are floating anchored in the Sandwip Channel with crews busy tearing them down part by part. The yard is also a death trap for the human

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Barefooted workers wearing Lungi and without any safety gears heading for work to a ship-breaking unit in Sitakunda, Chittagong.

Heartiest Felicitation to our
President Mr. Saifuzzaman Chowdhury
for being elected as the
Chairman
of
Port Users Forum (PUF)

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce & Industry

EC SIEGE PROGRAMME Shanta sues 28 cops for assault

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A woman, victim of the police brutality during the 14-party opposition's Election Commission besiege programme on March 12, filed a criminal case against 28 policemen including two Dhaka Metropolitan Police deputy commissioners (DC).

Complainant Shabin Sultana Shanta, daughter of Justice Shamsul Huda Manik and wife of Supreme Court lawyer Atiur Rahman, filed the case with Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka for assaulting her physically and mentally.

The accused are DC (South) Mazharul Huq, DC (West) Kohinur Miah, Constable Ruhul Amin and 25 other unknown policemen.

Hearing the case, Metropolitan Magistrate AJM Abdullah Baqui

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