

Fair polls, good governance, HR important for Bangladesh: EC

UNB, Dhaka

The European Commission (EC) has said holding of next general elections in a free and fair manner, ensuring good governance and human rights are important for Bangladesh for building its image as a democratic nation.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, commissioner for External Relations of the European Commission, made the remarks yesterday during a meeting with Foreign Minister Morshed Khan who arrived in Brussels on the second leg of his four-nation European tour.

The EC commissioner proposed sending election observer mission to Bangladesh to monitor the upcoming election.

During the meeting, bilateral trade and political relations between Bangladesh and the EC were discussed, according to a news release received from Brussels.

Morshed Khan and Waldner also discussed trade facilities and increase of export from Bangladesh to EU countries.

Funding of EC projects in Bangladesh, especially in the social sectors such as health and education, was also given priority during

the meeting. Morshed Khan briefed the EC Commissioner on political situation and ongoing trade and economic development of the country.

Waldner thanked the minister for successfully handling the terrorist outfits and appreciated the way Bangladesh has handled the situation.

Morshed Khan described the EU as the most important partner of Bangladesh, specially in capacity building. He sought continued support of the European Commission in enhancing trade and attracting FDI to Bangladesh.

He also briefed the commissioner on the country's achievements in poverty alleviation, micro-credit, elimination of gender discrimination in school enrolment, reduction of infant mortality, supply of safe drinking water and reduction of aid dependency for development programmes.

The minister said Bangladesh has achieved several Millennium Development Goals such as provision for safe drinking water, school enrolment and immunisation.

Shoib Chy granted bail again in sedition case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again granted bail to sacked managing director of Inqilab TV Salauddin Shoib Chowdhury in a sedition case as the prosecution lawyers did not oppose the bail petition.

On March 21, the High Court cancelled his (Shoib) bail granted by a lower court on April 30 last year as a rule was pending on the same issue with the higher court.

The High Court had also directed Shoib to surrender before the Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court within six weeks.

As per the order, he appeared before the court yesterday and prayed for bail.

During the hearing, Assistant Public Prosecutor (APP) Farid Halder did not oppose the bail petition although the judge asked PP Abdullah Mahmud Hassan and the APP whether they have any objection in this regard.

The prosecution even did not take part in the hearing on another petition submitted on May 21 last year by the PP for cancellation of Shoib's bail, saying that the present situation and the earlier situation was not the same.

Meanwhile, the defence withdrew the petition filed for taking back Shoib's passport seized earlier by the law enforcement agencies.

After hearing both the sides, Judge Mohammad Momin Ullah granted bail to Shoib upon a bond of Tk 5 lakh under his lawyer Samarendra Nath Goswami's lone surety.

Mohammad Abdul Hanif, officer-in-charge (OC) of the Airport Police Station, had filed the sedition case against Shoib with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka on January 24, 2004.

DUPDAA reunion

A daylong grand reunion of Dhaka University Political Science Department Alumni Association (DUPDAA) will be held on May 19 at the TSC on the university campus, says a press release.

Alumni are requested to register their name and collect coupon from the following persons by May 17: Dr Aminur Rahman of Political Science Department (966-1920 Ext: 4475), Rezaul Haq Chowdhury Mushtaq (935-0869 & 01711-524158), KMA Bari (881-2165 & 01711-527147), Rafiqul Islam (955-4043 & 0189-240473), AKM Nurul Alam (956-2531 & 0152-631705), Mostafa Kamal (9673130 & 01711-526354) and Nazrul Islam (988-1296 & 01715-036839).

DHAKA TODAY Lecture Bishwa Sahitya Kendra organises a special lecture on 'Archaeological heritage and preservation crisis' with Prof Dr AKM Shahnewaz as keynote speaker. Venue: Kendra auditorium. Time: 5:30pm. Discussion on hajj A discussion on 'Learn about hajj' will be held. Rules of hajj will be presented through audio, video and animation. Venue: Spectra Convention Centre. Time: 4:30pm. Lecture To mark the 10th anniversary of Liberation War Museum, it organises a lecture by Liz Shevesco, secretary general of International Coalition of Historic Sight Museums of Consciences. Venue: Museum auditorium. Time: 5:00pm. Rally Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon will hold a rally demanding demolition of illegal structures along the rivers of Shitalakha, Buriganga and Turag. Venue: In front of National Museum. Time: 10:30am.



Sammilita Ainjibi Samannay Parishad forms a human chain in front of the High Court in the city yesterday protesting proposed contempt of court law.

Elect legislators from all communities

Speakers call at workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a workshop yesterday called for introducing proportional election system to elect legislators representing all communities.

They said all candidates must disclose all relevant information including their assets and liabilities so that voters can elect honest and competent people in the next general election.

The workshop titled 'Study report on democracy, electoral process and the role of citizens' was organised by the Institute for Environment and Development (IED) at BETS centre in the city.

The speakers said the benefit of democracy cannot be achieved without electing competent candidates from all groups including woman, indigenous and minority communities.

Indigenous leader Sanjib Drang demanded five out of 300 parliament seats for indigenous people.

He said the election commission should identify the constituencies, for example, Bandarban can be designated as indigenous constituency so that all political parties nominate their candidates from that community.

Prof Muzafer Ahmad, a noted economist, said honest and patriotic candidates will not dare to contest the next general election if election expenditure is not restricted strictly.

He suggested displaying voter list at all union parishad offices to end discords about it.

Justice Abdur Rouf said democracy cannot be practised properly without strengthening citizens' role during the election.

He urged the election commission to create public awareness

about competent candidates in the next general election.

While presenting the keynote paper, Monwar Mostofa said proportional election system should be introduced as around 72 percent people have no faith in present political leaders.

Robayet Ferdous, assistant professor of mass communication and journalism department of Dhaka University, laid emphasis on the survey of different political parties to know about their ideology, objectives and activities.

Dr Salahuddin M Aminuzzaman moderated the workshop where Jyoti Chattopadhyay, Noman Ahmed Khan and representatives of some NGOs also spoke.

3 killed in stampede in Pirojpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Three people were allegedly killed in stampede caused by police baton charge on those who went to collect 'blessed water' from a newly emerged Pir (religious guide) at Mathbaria upazila in Pirojpur district on Wednesday.

The victims were identified as Mafizuddin, 50, of Andharmanik, Fulbanu, 60, of Sapleza and Sumon Mia, 70, of Golburnia villages.

According to witnesses and family sources, police and village police, engaged in maintaining

discipline, requested baton on people when they tried to get the blessing of Pir by breaking the queue.

At least 20 people were injured. Local administration attributed the death to victims' previous illness and old age complications.

They however acknowledged that there is huge crowd for last few days to get 'blessed water' and banana from Tota Hujur of Sonakhali.

People, standing on both sides of 13-kilometer-long roads from upazila sadar to Bandarpara and Sonakhali Bazar to Mollakhali, wait

every day under the scorching heat of the sun to collect blessing.

Tota, riding on a motorcycle at 10:00am every day, starts giving his blessing on their water or banana to fulfill their wishes or remove illness.

BCL beat 10 Shibir men at DU

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of main opposition Awami League, beat up at least 10 activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) leaving one of them critically injured on Dhaka University (DU) campus yesterday.

BCL also chased ICS activists on DU campus as they came from outside Dhaka to join national student council at Paltan Maidan.

Among them, Shahid Kamal, a student of English Department of Khulna BL College, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) with injuries in head.

Ahead of the ICS council, BCL and its alliance Chhatra Sangram Parishad kept guarding different entrances to the university and residential halls gates to resist Shibir men from entering DU on Wednesday night.

Witnesses said BCL men chased a group of 12-15 activists of ICS in front of Suryans Hall of DU at around 2:30pm and beat them up.

BCL men also chased another group of ICS men at Suhrawardi Udayan at around 4:00pm.

Earlier, at a rally in front of Arts Building of DU on Tuesday, BCL President Mahmud Hasan Ripon called its activists to resist Shibir on DU campus any way.

Launch agitation against govt

Dr Reza tells 'Blue for Peace' programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Reza Kibria, son of former slain finance minister Shah AMS Kibria, yesterday said Kansat incident has inspired the repressed people of the country to launch mass movement against the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition government.

He said people in several parts of the country are going to launch agitation like Kansat very soon as government's repression is continuing unabated.

Dr Reza was addressing the 'Blue for Peace' programme initiated by Asma Kibria, widow of slain Kibria, in front of the National Press Club in the capital.

Dr Reza said the campaign to protest the killing of his father would continue until the masterminds of the killers are arrested and brought to justice.

He said a group of assassins and militants has captured the politics of the country and they are killing all good people.

"Under the BNP-Jamaat regime, many sons like me have lost their fathers, but they could not organise any movement against the killers as they received threats from different quarters," he said.

"However, seeing our peaceful movement many families have been inspired and they are thinking of protesting their father's killings," he added.

Dr Reza said, "We want to awake people's conscience through our peaceful protest and thereby we want to put an end to all such killings in the country."

Wearing blue clothes, people from all walks of life including Asma Kibria, former Dhaka University Teachers' Association President Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Mahila Awami League leaders Dr Dipu Moni, Faridun Nahar Laily, Syeda Razia Sultana, Kaniz Fatima, Tohra Ali and Ahmed Ilias joined the programme expressing their solidarity with the demand for trial of the killers.

Bomb recovered at Khulna college

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police recovered a powerful bomb on the compound of Ahsanullah College at KDA avenue in Khulna city at about 1:15pm yesterday.

Night guard of the college Zillur Rahman first spotted the bomb, which created a panic among students and teachers.

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) rushed to the college soon after receiving the information.

Later, explosives experts defused the bomb.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Syed Mohammad Hossain, a social worker, politician and former director of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at Birdem Hospital on April 25 at the age of 68.

He is survived by two sons, Syed Amanullah Hossain Apu and Syed Ataulah Hossain Tapu, daughter Shaila Khandaker Mita and three grandchildren.

Syed Mohammad Hossain was the adviser to Dhaka City unit of Awami League.

His quikhwani will be held at his residence at South Begunbari, Tejgaon after Asr prayers today. Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to attend the quikhwani.

Death anniversary



Today is the first death anniversary of Abdur Razzak Mukul, a freedom fighter and former Awami League law-maker, says a press release.

A milad mahfil will be held at his Mohammadpur residence after Asr prayers.

Qulqhwani



Qulqhwani of Dr Kaafee Billah, an economist, will be held at his mother's residence at House # 44A, Road # 116, Gulshan after Asr prayers today, says a press release.

Dr Kaafee passed away due to a massive heart attack in Maryland, USA, on April 19. Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to attend the quikhwani.

SUCCESS IN PILOT PROJECT

School Health & Nutrition to be expanded to 10 upazilas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

School Health and Nutrition (SHN) Programme will be expanded to ten upazilas of Brahmanbaria following its success in a pilot project to improve health and nutrition status of school aged children.

This was disclosed at a meeting organised by Save the Children USA in collaboration with Directorate General of Health Services and Directorate General of Primary Education at Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre in the city yesterday.

The SHN programme will be expanded with the support of GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) as the programme at Nasirnagar in Brahmanbaria proved immensely successful, the speakers said.

Core elements of the programme are health and nutrition services, water and sanitation, promotion of healthy behaviours and school health related policies.

A baseline survey conducted in

the primary schools of Brahmanbaria district in 2004 revealed that a total of 56 percent of the students suffered from some degree of anaemia, 56 percent were infected with intestinal worms and almost a quarter of the students were stunted.

The study also revealed that 63 percent of children defecated in the open field and only 8 percent had access to a sanitary latrine at home.

Knowledge on using a latrine was found to be quite high, but practice was considerably low, it showed.

Through a comprehensive SHN programme, a total of 22, 318 students of 64 primary schools in six unions of Nasirnagar received deworming medicine twice a year, annual vision screening service, class room based weekly iron supplementation, access to first aid kits and ailments at schools, the speakers said.

The speakers also said SHN programme is a prevention activity

with a holistic approach and the schools have an important role to play for the development of children.

Country Director of Save the Children USA Edward Olney chaired the meeting while Director of Primary Health Care Dr Mahbubur Rahman, Mission Director of USAID Gene V George, Medical Officer of WHO, Bangladesh Dr George Komba Kono and Managing Director of GSK Limited, Bangladesh M Azizul Huq were present as special guests.

Director, Health, Population and Nutrition (HPN) of Save the Children USA Dr Nizam Uddin Ahmed stressed the need for raising public awareness and community mobilisation.

Programme Manager of SHN Dr Rasheduzzaman Shah delivered the welcome speech and the students under the programme staged a drama portraying the success of the programme.



School Health and Nutrition (SHN) Programme was launched at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city yesterday. Sitting from left are Gene V George, Edward Olney, Dr Mahbubur Rahman, Dr George Komba Kono and Dr Nizam Uddin Ahmed.

'Govt insincere in holding dialogue'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition leaders said the government seems insincere in holding dialogue on electoral reform agenda and so it is conspiring to avoid talks in the name of including Jamaat-e-Islami in their side.

The government has been showing lame excuses to avoid dialogue, they said, adding that if the 14-party can pass responsibility to Awami League (AL) why the four-party alliance cannot rely on BNP for holding dialogue.

They were speaking at a roundtable organised by Jatiya Samajtantrik Dai (JSD) at its office in the city yesterday.

"Once a consensus is made between the BNP and AL on the reform issues, the government can discuss those with its coalition partners before implementation. The 14-party will have no objection then," said JSD General Secretary Syed Zafar Sajjad, in his keynote speech.

AL Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed reiterated that there would be no election without the reforms in the Election Commission (EC) and caretaker system.

"The alliance government has politicised every sector of the administration by appointing and promoting partisan people and removing the honest and neutral officials," he pointed out.

Speaking for strengthening movement on the streets in line with the dialogue, he said transferring power through elections under the present system of caretaker government and the EC will push the nation into darkness.

Communist Party of Bangladesh

'Opposition conspiring to break alliance'

DU CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of ruling BNP-Jamaat coalition government yesterday said opposition 14-party alliance led by Awami League (AL) has been hatching conspiracy against the four-party alliance government to break the alliance ahead of the next general election through creating anarchy in the country.

They said opposition parties are afraid of the successful alliance of the four-party, as they know they cannot win the next election to be held in 2007 if they cannot break BNP-Jamaat alliance.

As part of 'opposition parties' blueprint to break the alliance, AL has been hatching conspiracy to destroy country's democracy through creating anarchy and to tarnish country's image by portraying Bangladesh as a communal country, the leaders added while addressing national student council of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh at Paltan Maidan in the city.

Addressing the council, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandakar Mosharrif Hossain said AL wanted to introduce Bangladesh as a communal country to the outside world through the militancy but we successfully eliminated militancy from the country.

Barrister Moudud Ahmed said a conspiracy is going on against country's democracy and coalition government through so-called movements in the name of reform in the Election Commission and caretaker government.

ICS President Muhammad Shafiqul Islam Masud presided over the meeting.



Bangladesh College Teachers' Association stages a demonstration at Muktangan in the city yesterday to press for their various demands.