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REFORM TALKS AL letter to BNP rejects Jamaat representatives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) in its reply to the ruling BNP's letter formally rejected the four-party alliance representatives for the proposed dialogue and resolved to press on with the demand for electoral reforms through movement.

"The persons proposed by the ruling BNP to discuss the electoral reforms are not politically acceptable," AL General Secretary and 14-party Coordinator Abdul Jalil said before sending the letter to his counterpart BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan.

He was speaking to the reporters at his Mercantile Bank office at Dilkusha in the city.

On receiving the letter, Bhuiyan told the media that they will soon respond to the AL's letter and urge the opposition to change their mind regarding the Jamaat issue in the interest of the dialogue.

Bhuiyan, also LGRD and cooperatives minister, said Jamaat is a part of the ruling coalition, and it is

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JS session debates on voter list controversy

Opposition demands cancellation of 'faked' roll; treasury bench asks it to go to EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parliament yesterday witnessed a lively debate on recently published draft voter list when the opposition lawmakers demanded cancellation of the "fake" list and the treasury bench members urged them to lodge complaints with the Election Commission (EC).

The Awami League (AL) lawmakers alleged that the draft list contains about two crore "fake voters" and it has been made as part of the ruling four-party alliance's "election engineering" to snatch victory in the next general election.

They apprehended that the country might face a constitutional crisis if the election is held on the basis of such "erroneous" lists.

The opposition lawmakers urged the government to ask the

chief election commissioner and other commissioners to resign for their failure in making a fair electoral roll.

But the treasury bench members, in reply, said the government was not involved in voter list preparation and it was absolutely a matter of the EC.

"This is not a matter of the government. The Election Commission is constitutionally independent and we can't remove the election commissioners," Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said during the two-hour unscheduled debate after the Magrib break.

"If there is any irregularities in the voter list, law will take its own course," the minister said urging the opposition to involve their field level workers to make the draft an accurate one.

Deputy Leader of the

Opposition Abdul Hamid, however, said the government's political will is enough to resolve such crisis.

Earlier, senior AL lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta, initiating the debate, said there is no possibility of a fair election with such huge number of fake voters. He apprehended a constitutional crisis if any election is held in compliance with the faulty list.

"Growth of voters in the recently released draft list is about 4.4 per cent, compared to the last voter list while our population growth is only 1.4 per cent," he pointed out.

Referring to the High Court directives on voter list preparation, Suranjit said as a constitutional body the EC should respect the High Court order to revise the last voter lists instead of making a new one.

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Kuwait pledges to supply fuel on easy terms

UNB, Kuwait

Responding positively to Bangladesh prime minister's request, Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has assured of supplying petroleum products to Bangladesh on easy terms.

The emir gave the assurance when Prime Minister Khaleda Zia called on him at the emir's palace yesterday, the last day of her two-day visit to the oil-rich Gulf state.

At the meeting, the two leaders discussed the adverse impact of rising oil prices in the world market.

Khaleda requested the Kuwaiti government to grant Bangladesh one year credit for purchasing oil from Kuwait at a concessional price.

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Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah hold talks at the latter's office in Kuwait City yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

72kg more heroin 'smuggled' to UK

Finds primary customs probe

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Kazi Zafar Reza, proprietor of Rainbow Enterprise, allegedly trafficked in 72kg heroin, in addition to BD Foods' 75.5kg, to the UK, said a source of the Directorate of Customs Intelligence and Investigation.

The source said following information from the British High Commission in Mumbai in November last year, a primary customs intelligence investigation found that Zafar, Tipu Enterprise and a company on the DIT Road in Kakrail were the racket behind the smuggling.

Earlier in May 2005, the UK customs accused five Bangladeshi business firms--BD Foods Ltd, Emdad Traders, Jamil International, MM Enterprise, and Green Haven

Enterprise--of smuggling 75.5kg heroin to that country in the guise of food, toiletries, cosmetics and floor tiles.

An investigation by the National Board of Revenue last year confirmed the validity of the allegations. A four-member team comprising members of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Special Branch of Police, Rapid Action Battalion and Bangladesh Bank is now investigating the smuggling at the directive of the home ministry.

"If the CID quizzes Zafar, the racket involved in smuggling 72kg heroin will also be revealed," the source said seeking anonymity.

Tipu Enterprise at 52 BK Das Road in Sutrapur area smuggled the drug through an apparently

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Compromise on stance to reach understanding EU envoys urge politicians about next polls

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

European Union (EU) envoys in Bangladesh yesterday urged the political leadership to compromise on their rigid positions and reach an understanding through talks to pave the way for free, fair and transparent general elections acceptable both at home and abroad.

They identified confrontational politics in Bangladesh as a serious problem, and stressed dialogue among political parties to remove differences and reach a consensus on credible polls.

"It is not a secret that confrontational politics here is a problem and the process of dialogue is necessary. You need to give up your certain positions if you want to reach a consensus," said EU Head of Delegation Ambassador Dr Stefan Frowein at a press confer-

ence on the eve of the Europe Day today.

British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury, German Ambassador Frank Meyke, the Netherlands Ambassador Kees Beemsterboer, Swedish Ambassador Ms Britt Falkman Hangstrom, French Deputy Head of Mission Jean Romnicianu, Danish Deputy Head of Mission Nathalia Feinberg and honorary consuls of Spain, Belgium, Greece, Austria, Slovak, Czech, Cyprus and Malta were present at the news conference at Hotel Sheraton.

"Time is running out fast for a negotiated settlement of pre-election wrangling and it is getting tighter," said Frowein while replying to a question. "We are not interfering into politics here but as friends we are only expressing our concern."

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BANGLADESHI WORKERS Kuwait agrees to lift recruitment barriers

Trade, investment dominate bilateral talks

UNB, Kuwait City

Kuwait has agreed to lift all barriers to recruiting Bangladeshi workers.

Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah conveyed his government's decision during official talks with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the Kuwaiti prime minister's office on Sunday night.

Nearly 250,000 Bangladeshis now work in Kuwait.

Bangladesh Ambassador in Kuwait Nazrul Islam Khan told the news agency that the Kuwaiti government decided to lift the

barriers as a courtesy to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

He said the Kuwaiti government has assured Bangladesh of providing assistance and cooperation in all areas as a mark of friendly relations that exist between the two countries.

During the talks, Bangladesh and Kuwait have agreed to increase trade, commerce and business relations between the two countries.

Both the countries have agreed to send trade and investment

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IMPORTING GAS FROM MYANMAR Delhi may decide to bypass Dhaka

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

India might finally decide to bypass Bangladesh in importing gas from Myanmar since Bangladesh has been sitting idle for the last 15 months regarding a tri-nation gas pipeline.

A high level Indian delegation last week in Yangon requested the Myanmar government to finalise a route out of six alternatives all of which proposed to bypass Bangladesh.

BS Negi, director of business development of GAIL (India) Ltd, made the presentation before the A-1 and A-3 offshore block partners, and the Myanmar govern-

ment on the routes through north-eastern Indian territory.

The detailed report submitted at the meeting proposes routing the pipeline through the Indian states of Mizoram, Assam, Bihar and West Bengal.

A draft memorandum of understanding (MOU) among India, Myanmar and Bangladesh was signed in February 2005 for construction of the proposed tri-nation gas pipeline to carry gas from Myanmar to India through Bangladeshi territory. A tri-nation techno-commercial meeting with representations from all the three countries signed the draft MOU in

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Saarc top cops sit today to talk terrorism, trafficking

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police chiefs of Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries meet in the capital today to discuss strengthening cooperation among the police departments of the seven member countries in matters of law enforcement in the region.

The "Fifth Saarc Conference on

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Writ petitions challenging poll symbols rejected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) summarily rejected yesterday two separate writ petitions challenging the validity of the election symbols of BNP, Awami League (AL), Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami.

Advocate Manzill Murshid, counsel for a petition that challenged the validity of scales as

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Shanir Akhra people yet to get adequate water

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Water and Sewerage Authorities (Wasa) could not yet ensure adequate supply of water four days into Friday's fierce demonstrations at Shanir Akhra in Demra.

The residents were still relying on the water distributed by the army.

The newly installed pump at

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