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Opposition asked not to confuse people over EC, presidency

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dispelling the opposition lawmakers' apprehension about a 'conspiracy' against parliamentary democracy, senior ministers yesterday told parliament the main opposition is creating 'unnecessary issues' targeting the president and the Election Commission (EC) to confuse people.

The opposition lawmakers during the budget discussion alleged that parliament is being made ineffective deliberately under a "deep-rooted conspiracy" aimed at a reversal of the system. They also questioned the "existence" of two presidents in the country.

Replanning to the allegation, ministers including Moudud Ahmed, Nazmul Huda and Motiur Rahman Nizami asked the opposition to refrain from the politics of "anarchy" and "conspiracy" and to

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Graft rarely on JS body agenda

TIB report reveals most parliamentary bodies ignore Rules of Procedures; quorum crisis cost Tk 3 crore last year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Most parliamentary bodies of the current parliament have ignored the Rules of Procedures in holding meetings and hardly discussed the corruption and irregularities in the ministries, said a Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) report yesterday.

Surveying the activities of all 37 parliamentary standing committees tasked with ensuring the government's accountability to the Jatiya Sangsad, the report found that 27 of them failed to hold one meeting every month as per the

rule. The ministers and members concerned also did not turn up in the meetings regularly. "Ministers or state ministers were present at only 42 per cent of total meetings," the TIB survey styled "ParliamentWatch 2005" revealed. Maintaining that a parliament's effectiveness and success largely depend on efficient and strong performance of its committee system, the research found that the standing committees also set "less important issues" on agenda for discussion. From an analysis of last year's

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Govt makes import of sugar, pulse easy

UNB, Dhaka

The government yesterday relaxed rules for import of sugar and pulse through Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) in a bid to cool down the market prices of the two essential commodities.

With the revision to the import rules, an importer now will be able to import sugar and pulse via TCB by depositing only two per cent of earnest money against the total import value, which was 10 per cent earlier.

The decision to relax the import rules was taken at a cabinet committee meeting on economic affairs held at the secretariat with Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman in the chair. Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, among others, was present.

At the meeting, Saifur strongly criticised the Indian government's decision not to export wheat, sugar

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PHOTO: AFP

French captain Zinedine Zidane (L) celebrates his goal with fellow midfielder Franck Ribery, who scored the equaliser, during their round of 16 match against Spain at the Hanover stadium yesterday.

France set Brazil clash

AFP, Hanover

An inspired France marshalled by Zinedine Zidane swept to a 3-1 win over Spain here on yesterday to set up a dream World Cup quarterfinal date with Brazil.

Spain took the lead with a penalty from David Villa before Frank Ribery levelled, with Patrick Vieira and Zidane finishing off a memorable night for les Bleus.

France had promised to show her true face after making heavy weather of her opening group matches and she kept her word as Raymond Domenech's ageing side produced their prettiest football

since arriving in Germany and arguably the best since he took over after Euro 2004.

But it was Spain who went ahead in the 26th minute after defender Lilian Thuram tackled Pablo Ibanez from behind, stepping on the Atletico Madrid defender's ankle.

Italian referee Roberto Rossetti had no hesitation in pointing to the spot despite protests from Zidane with David Villa stepping up to slot the ball low and left past Fabien Barthez to leave the 1998 champions on the back foot.

Up to then France were matching Spain step by step for pace,

constructing some deft moves with Zidane at the heart of most and Ribery keeping the Spanish defence on their toes on the right.

Ribery had France's best early chance after Thierry Henry squared the ball from the right only for the young Marseille midfielder to fluff his lines from in front of Iker Casillas' goal.

But Ribery then showed why they're calling him the next Zidane as he drew France back level in the 41st minute as he latched onto a through ball from Vieira, beat off two Spanish defenders, side-stepped the onrushing Casillas and

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Commentary

PM, please don't change the President

Trivialisation of the highest constitutional post?

MAHFUZ ANAM

We would like to still believe, though it's becoming harder by the day, that all we are hearing about changing the President are mere rumour. However, we cannot, in all sincerity, say that they are totally baseless. On the contrary, government's own actions have given sufficient grounds to suspect that some forces within the power structure, driven by one individual's not so hidden ambition, are

trying to remove the President and replace him with a hardcore party person.

Though Khaleda Zia may not have still made up her mind, and we would like to believe so, yet sadly enough there is circumstantial evidence to feel that the prime minister has sufficiently been attracted to seriously considering this dangerous idea. Our commentary today is an appeal to the Prime Minister for not making this blunder. Such a move would be an

extremely shortsighted one that would destroy the dignity and functionality of the highest constitutional office.

Our President is truly a figurehead. He enjoys very little political power. Whatever power he possesses is moral, which comes from his being above all political factions and parties and being acceptable to all. Given the fractured nature of our politics, it is vital that we leave out at least one person to

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CEC hits the roof as 3 parties ask him to go

Blames political leaders for voter list stalemate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz took a swipe at three political parties that met him and two election commissioners yesterday, demanding their immediate resignation on grounds of losing people's confidence.

The CEC burst out in anger and blamed all political parties and their leaders for the "prevailing situation" over the preparation of the voter list, sources said.

"Why will I resign? I cannot resign following the demands by

any politician or any political party," Major (ret'd) Abdul Mannan, secretary general of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh, quoted the CEC as telling the political leaders at the meeting.

Leaders of Bikalpa Dhara, Jatiya Oikya Mancha and Tarikat Federation submitted separate letters to the CEC and election commissioners Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria, demanding their immediate resignation.

"The chief election commissioner expressed his dissatisfaction

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PHOTO: STAR

Fellow community primary teachers take a teacher to hospital by a rickshaw after she fell sick on the 10th day of their fast-unto-death strike at the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital yesterday.

Teachers end strike, but crisis not over

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Community primary teachers, who were observing hunger strike for ten consecutive days, suspended all agitation programmes yesterday while government primary teachers postponed theirs on late Monday night for one month following discussions with the government.

Community primary teachers also cancelled their self-immolation programme, where 15 of their colleagues were supposed to commit suicide, following request from the Awami League (AL) led 14-party alliance and representatives of different professional bodies and human rights organisations.

The police seized black cloths, kerosene, patrol and matchboxes around 11:00am when the community teachers were preparing to set

their bodies on fire at the Central Shaheed Minar.

Keeping their schools closed, community primary teachers, who draw only Tk 750 a month each from the government exchequer, started hunger strike until death at the Central Shaheed Minar from June 18 demanding nationalisation of their jobs.

On the other hand, two groups of government primary teachers started hunger strike until death from Saturday last at separate places in the capital demanding elimination of wage discrimination and introduction of school-based examination system.

COMMUNITY PRIMARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION Leaders and activists of AL led 14-party coalition, lawyers, university

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Ronaldo shoots into glory

AFP, Dortmund

Brazil striker Ronaldo said he hoped he had given his countrymen and women cause to start parrying after his goal in a 3-0 canteer over Ghana made him the top scorer in World Cup history.

"I'm very happy with the result, and with breaking the record -- but we win as a team. I get goals and on we go," grinned the 29-year-old Real Madrid star.

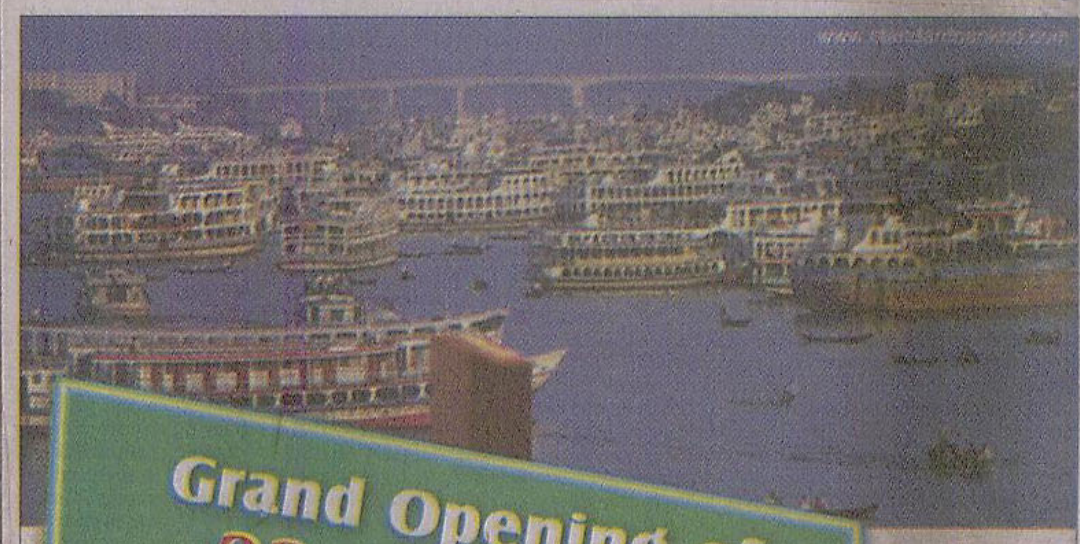
His fifth-minute strike gave him

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Germany v Argentina	9:00 pm	Berlin
Italy v Ukraine	1:00 am (Saturday)	Hamburg

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SHAZNEEN CASE

Hearing ends, verdict July 4

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Death Reference Bench of the High Court has fixed July 4 for delivering the verdict on the sensational Shazneen murder case.

The bench comprising Justices Ali Asgar Khan and Emdadul Haque scheduled the date yesterday on completion of hearing both the prosecution and the defence arguments over a period of 31 days. Both the sides made their submissions in short on the last day of the hearing.

Presenting statements of the witnesses, documents of the case, and different precedents of the higher court, the prosecution appealed to the bench to uphold the lower court judgement of death sentences for the accused six.

But the defence, presenting their arguments, appealed for acquittal of the defendants.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, youngest daughter of a leading

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