

Opposition parties

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Leaders from both the ruling and opposition parties, however, agreed on the call for resignation of the chief election commissioner (CEC) and other commissioners to clear the way for a credible election.

Criticising the civil society's initiative, Saifur Rahman said, "They (Nagorik Committee) have no work... they deliver speeches for free and hold meetings in the air conditioned rooms."

Speaking with the reporters, he termed the committee a 'self-appointed body'.

KM Obaidur Rahman said they also want honest and qualified people as candidates in the upcoming election. "If the honest and competent persons get involved in politics and join a party then they could be nominated for the election," he told The Daily Star.

Referring to the finance and law ministers' speeches on CEC, he said, "I don't know why he (CEC) is carrying on. He should make an immediate exit when both the ruling and opposition parties have already voiced disapproval of his continuing."

President Member of Awami League (AL) Tofail Ahmed said they have been calling for electoral reforms since last year to ensure a free and fair election. "We want politics to be free of corruption and black money," he told The Daily Star.

He said the demand for resignation of the CEC and two commissioners has become a popular demand and they should quit immediately.

"By placing the recommendations, the citizens' committee has proved to the people that our reform proposals

are very much rational," Rashed Khan Menon, president of Workers Party told The Daily Star.

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim said finally, the intellectuals have voiced their opinions favouring electoral reforms. "I think the recommendations are necessary but not yet sufficient," he told The Daily Star.

"The committee should have asked for keeping the war criminals and religious fanatics out of politics," he added.

Jatiya Party (JP-Manju) Chairman Anwar Hossain Manju said the people should resist the corrupt persons in the next election. "We do need reforms. But things cannot be changed overnight," he said, urging the CEC and two commissioners to stand down for the sake of an acceptable election.

The Nagorik Committee recommendations relate to electoral and political reforms, resignation of the CEC and two other commissioners, empowerment of the EC to cancel candidature of a candidate at any stage of the election, preparation of a computerised database of voters, publication of constituency-wise voter list, registration of political parties, execution of loan-default laws strictly for the candidates and disposing of the electoral disputes within 180 days of an election.

Hartal observed

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convenor of Phulbari Protection Committee, also the chairman of Phulbari Municipality, alleged that London-based Asia Energy Corporation (AEC) is now preparing a 30-year open pit coal mining plan for Phulbari Project that would require relocating around 4,70,000 people including 50,000 indigenous people from about 100 surrounding villages and parts of Phulbari town.

However, AEC sources claimed that the project would relocate only 40,000 people including 2,000 indigenous people from four affected upazilas under Dinajpur. AEC requires 5,900 hectares of land for its proposed open pit mining, which most Bangladesh energy experts consider socially and environmentally hazardous.

According to AEC sources, Phulbari reservoir has an estimated 572 million tons of high quality coal – enough to generate 8,000 megawatts of power for 30 years.

Phulbari Protection Committee has been campaigning against the open-pit mining project in Phulbari for over one and a half years.

WB to provide

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Development Association (IDA) credits.

The plant will be state-of-the-art with two 150MW simple-cycle and gas turbines.

Bangladesh suffers from an acute short supply of power at peak hours. To improve the situation, an estimated investment, both public and private, of Tk 700 billion or roughly \$10 billion per year, will be needed over the next 10 years.

A recent World Bank Mission concluded discussion with the government on the SPPP components that include environmental and social impact assessments of the project.

The power plant will be owned by the BPDB-owned Electricity Generating Company of Bangladesh (EGCB), a new corporatised entity, set up for the purpose of owning and operating new and existing power stations.

EGCB will also own another 240MW plant to be built at Siddhirganj under a parallel Asian Development Bank project. The project also includes gas and power transmission components.

The power transmission line will be owned and operated by the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB). The SPPP will be run by an Operations & Maintenance (O&M) contractor hired from the international market for six years.

The O&M contractor will help strengthen EGCB institutionally over the period in addition to the core O&M responsibilities.

In the past, the World Bank supported private generation capacity through the partial risk guarantee provided as part of the financing of the Haripur power project, now owned and operated by Globeleq.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), a private sector arm of the World Bank Group, is discussing with the government to serve as transaction advisor for a new private power project in Bangladesh.

19 injured

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Khulna-Jessore highway creating panic among the general students and pedestrians. Locals said non-student Shibir activists exploded two bombs as they went on a rampage in the four dormitories. There were also reports of looting by the Shibir cadres at the dormitories.

Communication on Khulna-Jessore highway was disrupted for an hour as Shibir activists set up barricades at different points on the highway.

On-duty police outside the campus remained inactive as Shibir cadres closed all the gates of the campus, locals said. A Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) high official said his men were also attacked with brickbats during the clash.

Leaders of ICS, denying all allegations against them, blamed BCL and Chhatra Union activists for resorting to violence.

A restaurant owner outside the campus said he saw Mian Mujahidul Islam, younger brother of Jamaat-e-Islami lawmakmer Mian Golam Parwar, leading the non-student Shibir cadres on the campus.

Investigators trace

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smuggling 154kg heroin to the UK, also said his vegetable export business could not compete with the BD Foods that used to sell vegetables at a lower price since its vegetables were only a cover for heroin smuggling.

BD Foods top boss Badruddoza was arrested on May 14 after two of his accomplices—Nazmul Haider Buyiyan Bulbul, a former BD Foods official, and his cohort Mokhlesur Rahman Nayan, a cargo handler—confessed to having smuggled 22.5kg heroin to the UK at his command.

A five-member team comprising representatives of the Criminal Investigation Department, Rapid Action Battalion, Special Branch of police, Bangladesh Bank and the Department of Narcotics Control is coordinating the investigations.

The UK customs in May 2005 accused five Bangladeshi business firms, including BD Foods Ltd, of smuggling heroin in the guise of food, toiletries, cosmetics and floor tiles.

Voter list updating

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registration officers (ARO), 83 district and over 500 upazila election officers for miscellaneous purposes.

Another significant amount of money was spent for printing forms of voters' registration and deletion of names distributed since July 1.

"The allocated money has already been spent for the task since July 1 and new allocation is needed to begin the task for updating the voter list by visiting door to door after July 20," a district election officer appointed as registration officer told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

The expenditure since July 1, however, will exceed the allocation if the remuneration of the AROs working for the last 18 days is calculated.

The amount spent for voters' forms has also been wasted as those forms were never returned.

A total of 1,400 forms for inclusion and deletion of names were distributed from the commissioner's office of ward-14 under Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), but only 80 forms were submitted in the last 18 days.

Similarly, 200 forms were distributed in ward-2 at Pallabi but only four were submitted, while 400 forms were distributed in ward-3 of which 15 were submitted.

Many feared that since the election officials will now visit door to door for updating the voter list, rest of the forms will go wasted.

Meanwhile, before the 21-day door-to-door visit begins on July 21, recruitment of over one lakh assistant officials will have to be completed by July 20.

The secretary of the EC Secretariat yesterday claimed that the field level officials are not facing any difficulty in recruiting the assistant officers for the task.

"I have inquired about the situation of at least 20 districts, but no one informed me of any difficulty regarding the recruitment," Abdur Rashid told reporters yesterday. "I hope the recruitment will be completed in time and the task for updating the voter list by visiting door to door will begin on July 21," he added.

BSF kills 1

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Kalaroa upazila in the afternoon.

Immediately after the incident, BDR personnel have been put on alert along the 138-km border of the district. When contacted, Lt Col Asadur Rahman Khan, commanding officer (CO) of 41 Rifles Battalion, confirmed the incident.

Lashkar-e-Qahar

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Mumbai is located.

While police are still trying to determine who carried out the well-coordinated attack, an outfit calling itself Lashkar-e-Qahar said in an e-mail to a local television station that 16 people took part in the bombings in Mumbai – also known as Mumbai – and that one was killed.

But "all the remaining 15 ... are totally safe, and celebrating the success of this mission and also preparing for the next mission," said the e-mail, written in poorly punctuated, often ungrammatical English.

"We also request all the Muslim brothers and sisters of India to (not) go near the main historical, governmental and the monumental places of India (especially in Delhi and Mumbai) in future," the e-mail said. "Otherwise, they get hurt too."

Indian police said they were investigating the veracity of the e-mail, provided to The Associated Press by Aaj Tak television.

In the e-mail, Lashkar-e-Qahar said it would soon address doubts about its earlier claim of responsibility by providing audio and video proof.

The group had first said it was behind the Mumbai bombings in an e-mail to Aaj Tak on Saturday.

"We are surprised, why some media groups and peoples are disclaiming our responsibility?" the e-mail said.

"Therefore it has become necessary for Lashkar-e-Qahar to prove our claim," it said. "Very soon, we will send you an audio/video tape regarding Mumbai blasts."

Lashkar-e-Qahar, or the Army of Terror, was unknown until it claimed responsibility for the March 7 bombings in the Hindu holy city of Varanasi that killed at least 20 people.

Investigators believe the group may be a front for Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, an Islamic militant group based in Pakistan that has long fought Indian rule in Kashmir, a predominantly Muslim Himalayan region.

The e-mail was signed by a man calling himself Abu Mahaz, who identified himself as Lashkar's spokesman and the head of its "media group."

Investigators were also hunting for leads on the other side of India, in the northeastern state of Tripura, where they questioned two preachers from a legal-Muslim organization called Tabiq-e-Jamaat over the train blasts, said Joint

SPECIAL FOCUS ON DHAKA

Considering possible difficulties in the capital in getting the task done, the EC Secretariat has formed ten coordination committees headed by zonal executive officers of the DCC to avoid any complexity.

"The capital is a very congested area where the rate of migration is very high. We might face some problems in updating the voter list here," the EC secretary said.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz will hold a meeting with the DCC chief executives and zonal officers today at his office.

The EC secretary said the meeting will find out the possible difficulties and initiatives will be taken to resolve those difficulties.

Officials at the EC Secretariat, however, said the same problems might also arise in most metropolitan cities, Narayanganj and Savar.

Profit repatriation

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Renowned economist and executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya deducts from this trend that the country must try to increase overall FDI inflow, especially in the manufacturing sector to offset any negative impact on the balance of payment.

"Higher investment in the manufacturing sector will also increase employment opportunities," he added.

"So far, Bangladesh could not facilitate investment in the manufacturing sector as fast and smoothly as it did in the service sector," Debapriya said. Some major investments in the manufacturing sector recently faced stagnation due to government indecision but the authorities were prompt as regards service sector like telecom, he added.

Bangladesh Bank should strengthen its monitoring to see if the outflow of money is genuine.

Research Director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) Zaid Bakht however does not discourage investment in the service sector. "It has a linkage effect on the economy," he said.

"But the government should take measures to slash the profit outflow. For instance, it could make it mandatory for the investors to float shares in the stock markets."

Bakht went on, "Besides, the government should now scrutinise the new FDI proposals more intensely and encourage those which are most needed for the development of the country."

Jagannath

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Shibir cadres clashed with BCL, JCD and a number of left-leaning students' organisations on the campus Monday. Fifteen more were injured in another clash on Sunday.

The main opposition Awami League (AL) backed students' organisation BCL's Jagannath University unit, Dhaka City South BCL and Bangladesh Chhatra Union brought out processions outside the campus chanting anti-ICS slogans.

BCL central committee also organised an anti-ICS demonstration on Dhaka University campus yesterday morning.

Sub-inspector Aslam of Kotwali Police Station filed a case in connection with the Monday's clash.

Shibir leader Mohibullah filed another case with the same police station against 12 BCL leaders and activists of Jagannath University unit. The BCL leaders are Zahid, Sohag, Imon, Arif, Rony, Saikat, Jewel, Jahir, Musa, Sumon, Faruque and Shamim.

The university authorities in an urgent meeting on Monday decided to suspend classes until July 20. Sources in the administration said it might not be possible to reopen the university on the schedule date.

The seven-member probe committee on the Monday's incident, headed by the Registrar Abu Hossain Siddiqui, was asked to submit its report within 10 days.

"The committee has started its work today [yesterday]," said Vice-chancellor Prof Sirajul Islam Khan.

He said, "We have called for a teachers' meeting tomorrow to assess the situation and to decide when to reopen the campus." He however said he was hopeful that they would be able to reopen the university on Saturday.

Oil tanker

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formed with teachers of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) is likely to submit its report today. The members of the BUET expert committee visited the ship, committee sources said.

The investigation committees formed by the ministry and the BSC expressed almost similar views regarding the causes behind the fire. The committee observed violation of international regulations and handling of equipment by unskilled operators were to blame for the accident.

They suspect while cleaning the ship's tanks, sparks from the electric blower might have caused the fire and explosion which killed three people on board.

The BSC probe committee has already submitted its report. The three-member committee headed by General Manger [workshop] Saiddullah found gross irregularities in recruiting people by a section of BSC officials.

The committee found the BSC officials tampered the certificate of nautical cadet Mehdi Hasan who died in the accident. He had no tanker endorse certificate, which is necessary for working on an oil tanker, the report said.

Besides, there was another minor accident at the ship around 12 hours before the huge accident. The BSC authorities ignored the minor accident, the probe committee found, according to sources.

The experts observed the repairing of the ship would be cost effective only if it is done in the country. Otherwise, if the ship is repaired abroad it might not be so cost effective, the source pointed out.

The BSC had only two oil tankers, Banglar Shourabh and Banglar Joyti, in its 13-ship fleet. The Banglar Shourabh was used for lightering purposes like carrying oil from mother vessels anchored at deep sea.

Development rice

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projects at Charnatabari and Rahihabil, sources said.

The TNO of Dahnut said the local administration will file at least three cases to recover 140 metric ton rice.

Meanwhile, 100 metric ton rice was misappropriated from different development projects in Kahlao upazila. A local administration official said almost all the projects in Kahlao were allegedly left incomplete.

Some ward commissioners of Kahlao municipality alleged at a press conference on 15 July that 70 metric ton rice was withdrawn against two fake development projects for work on the Kahlao municipality office premises.

Rashida Akter Babil, wife of a local BNP leader and ward commissioner, withdrew 25 metric ton rice against a drain-repairing project on the premises of the municipality office.

Local BNP leader Abdul Mannan allegedly withdrew 45 metric ton rice against an earth-filling project on the municipality premises but sources said the municipality authorities had earlier completed a similar project at a cost of Tk 6,32,000.

Faridur Rahman Farid, chairman of Kahlao municipality, however, dined the allegations.

Israel refuses

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soldiers, according to medics and police, while more than 480 people have been wounded.

Israeli aircraft also struck Beirut's southern suburbs and an army position overlooking the capital as well as two other Lebanese towns.

After battering the country from the air, Israel's army refused to rule out a massive ground invasion of south Lebanon only six years after it ended its occupation of the area.

The Lebanese army has largely stayed out of the fighting, but its positions have been repeatedly attacked by Israeli warplanes, undermining Israel's call for it to help push back Hezbollah from the border.

"At this stage we do not think we have to activate massive ground forces into Lebanon but if we have to do this, we will. We are not ruling it out," Moshe Kaplinsky, Israel's deputy army chief, told Israel Radio.

He said the offensive would end within a few weeks, adding that Israel needed more time to complete "very clear goals."

"The fighting in Lebanon will end within a few weeks. We will not take months," Kaplinsky said.

A poll in the mass circulation Yedioth Ahronoth daily showed a vast majority of Israelis supported the offensive in Lebanon and many believed the Hezbollah leader should be assassinated.

It showed 86 percent of Israelis believed the army's attacks on Lebanon were justified.

Thousands of foreigners fled Lebanon – some by road to Syria, others seeking places on US and European ships after Beirut's international airport was closed by Israeli fire. About 100,000 Lebanese have also fled their homes and moved to safer areas to escape the violence.

The fighting was triggered when Hezbollah, the guerrilla group, which is backed by Syria and Iran and is part of Lebanon's government, seized two Israeli soldiers and killed eight in a cross-border raid on northern Israel on July 12.

The Israeli retaliation has killed mostly civilians and inflicted the heaviest destruction in Lebanon for two decades, with attacks targeting ports, roads, bridges, factories and petrol stations.

Hezbollah responded by attacking a naval vessel off Beirut and firing hundreds of rockets at northern Israel, killing 24 people, 12 of them civilians.

The Jewish state is also engaged in a military offensive in the Gaza Strip after Palestinian militants captured another soldier on June 25.

Lebanon has repeatedly called for an immediate ceasefire, but world powers said any solution to the crisis must include the release of the two soldiers. Israel also wants Hezbollah to disarm in line with United Nations Security Council resolutions.

The Beirut government is too

fragile to pressure Hezbollah to yield to such demands.

The Shia Muslim guerrilla group wants to swap the two soldiers with Lebanese and Arab prisoners in Israeli jails.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said on Monday his country would pursue its offensive until the two soldiers were returned and the Lebanese army controlled all of south Lebanon.

An Israeli government source said Israel may step up attacks in coming days, mindful its chief ally, the United States, might not resist indefinitely international pressure for a ceasefire. Washington has backed Israel's right to self-defence.

A UN team sent to Lebanon to seek a solution to the fighting said it had made a promising start but that more diplomacy was needed before there could be any optimism.

A Hezbollah spokesman told Reuters the group had "not received any suggestions for a ceasefire."

British Prime Minister Tony Blair and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged the UN Security Council to deploy a security force in Lebanon but the United States frowned on the idea.

French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, speaking in Beirut after talks with the Lebanese government, called for an immediate truce on humanitarian grounds.

Balls of fire and clouds of smoke billowed from a Lebanese army position east of Beirut after repeated Israeli air strikes in the early hours of Tuesday and several soldiers were wounded, a security source said.

Loud explosions caused by raids on Beirut's southern suburbs were also heard across the capital. Previous strikes on the area had already demolished Hezbollah's headquarters.

Hezbollah fired dozens of rockets at the Israeli city of Haifa on Monday and medics said a three-storey building collapsed, wounding two people. Israel closed Haifa's port.

Another wave of rockets struck deep inside Israel, including the town of Afula 50km south of the border. One rocket landed next to a hospital in Safed, wounding six people.

Buriganga

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said. About the task force meeting, the minister said he would fix up a date for the meeting after consultation with the ministry officials.

With shortage of manpower the corporation could do little to prevent people from dumping rubbish into the river, DCC's Chief Conservancy Officer Commander Sohel Faruqui said, adding that at short distances along the river, DCC has placed rubbish containers where the local people are supposed to dispose of rubbish.

He said dumping rubbish into the Buriganga is meant for grabbing the river in which a vested interest quarter is involved.

Tsunami survivors

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was happening. He came back screaming, "There is a wave, there is a wave. The sea is coming, the sea is coming!" Martin recalled.

"We quickly ran to the second floor and soon the waves came in and crashed into the first floor... We were there for about five minutes, and we went up to the rooftop by breaking through the ceiling."

At least 343 people were killed and 431 people injured across six districts along Central and West Java provinces, the social affairs ministry said.

Most deaths were in Pangandaran in West Java's Ciamis district, about 270 kilometres (170 miles) southeast of Jakarta.

Among the dead were a Japanese and a Belgian, the head of the health ministry's crisis center, Rustam Pakaya, told AFP.

Sweden's foreign ministry said one of its nationals had died. Some 150 were still missing while 52,700 had been displaced by the surges of water, the head of the ministry's crisis center, Rustam Pakaya, told AFP.

Most deaths were in the resort area of Pangandaran in West Java's Ciamis district, about 270km southeast of Jakarta, he said.

Agus Sutrisno, head of disaster relief in Ciamis, said more than 1,500 workers were combing coastal areas for survivors and bodies.

"We suspect there are still many people buried under the debris. We lack heavy equipment such as backhoes and electric chainsaws," he said.

A 26-year-old Frenchwoman previously thought dead was found alive, the French ambassador said in Jakarta, while Sweden's foreign ministry said one of its nationals had died in the disaster.

Hamed Abukhamis, a 40-year-old Saudi Arabian covered in scratches and cuts, told AFP that he had brought the bodies of his wife and son to a hospital morgue himself.

"I don't know how I'm alive – it's a miracle," he told AFP, his voice quivering as he choked back tears.

The whereabouts of two

SC Bar mulls

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them not to confirm appointment of many of them.

Seeking anonymity, he said the lawyers would meet again on Saturday to plan launching a fresh movement on the issue involving other sections of people like civil society members.

Appointment of the 19 additional judges including Faizee triggered resentment among lawyers and they described this as the worst example of politicisation of the judiciary.

Under the SCBA platform, lawyers staged demonstrations on the SC premises that included boycott of the newly appointed judges' benches. The SCBA also demonstrated at Faizee's court and on the entryway of the chief justice demanding Faizee's removal.

This led to a crisis when pro-government lawyers took a stand against the SCBA movement. On May 23 last year, the HC issued a rule banning agitation on the premises of the SC or any other courts as well as boycott of the courts.

Amidst rising controversy about LLB certificate and age of Faizee, the then SCBA Secretary Enayetur Rahim had sent a letter to the president on May last year urging him to resolve the controversy.

After a month, the president's office wrote to the law ministry to take necessary steps but the ministry is yet to do so.

Asked about the matter, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday declined to make any comment.

SCBA Secretary M Aminuddin yesterday said many of the Bar members have demanded legal steps to force the law ministry to implement the president's directive. "So, we are considering taking up the matter with the court."

Sources said the executive committee of the SCBA is scheduled to meet tomorrow and it will also discuss legal steps about Faizee controversy.

The SCBA in its letter to the president said Faizee did not have the original LLB certificate when he took

oath as judge. Although Chittagong University issued a provisional LLB certificate to him, its syndicate later decided against issuing the original certificate because of flaws in his marks-sheet. The decision is still valid, the letter maintains.

Faizee's year of birth as in his SSC certificate is 1963 but he mentioned it to be 1965 when he applied for Bangladesh Bar Council certificate for legal practice, the SCBA pointed out.

Enayetur Rahim observed that the law ministry disregarded the presidency by ignoring its directive. "The law ministry did not take any step despite the president's directive only to protect party interest," he said.

State minister

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reduce power cuts in the country.