

Govt to end tenure by not separating judiciary

Court adjourns hearing till Nov 12 upon prayer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The judiciary will not be separated from the executive during the tenure of the present government although it was a key election pledge of the BNP-led four-party alliance.

In response to a government prayer, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court (SC) yesterday adjourned hearing of the judiciary-separation case until November 12.

It gives the coalition government a further opportunity to sidestep its responsibility to implement the 12-point SC directive for separation of the judiciary.

The ruling alliance is scheduled to hand over power in October, and therefore the caretaker government will be in power when the hearing will resume.

On July 27, barrister Amir-Ul Islam, intervenor in the case, placed before the SC a comparative chart depicting 'the anomalies that the government has created' with regard to implementation of the 12-point directive.

Following Amir-Ul's argument

about the chart yesterday, Attorney General AJ Mohammad Ali submitted a prayer for adjournment of the hearing.

He contended that the government needs time for making submissions relating to the chart and petitioned the court to hold the next hearing after the upcoming vacations.

The court first goes on a vacation for one and a half months from September 1. It will remain open for a week before going into another vacation slated to end on November 4.

Amir-Ul opposed the government prayer and asked the court to fix today (Monday) for next hearing. He contended if the next hearing date is preceded by the vacations, the tenure of the government will end by that time.

On hearing both the sides, the SC adjourned hearing until November 12.

After the court order, Amir told the press that the government was in fact lying in wait for just such an opportunity to duck the responsibility to separate the judiciary

within its tenure, he said referring to the court order.

The government is not sincere in carrying out the SC directives, he said.

Meantime, admitting that separation of the judiciary figured in their election manifesto, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said that no specific timescale however was mentioned for this.

He was speaking to the press after the court order.

"We've shown that we are sincere in our efforts to carry out separation of the judiciary. We've done many things and have some more to do. We're working on it," he said.

During the hearing yesterday, barrister Amir told the court that the rules framed by the alliance government for separation of the judiciary do not conform to the 12-point directive.

Little freedom that the judiciary would enjoy before the rules were set down was restricted by the new rules. They have made the judiciary subject to three ministries whereas

Prolonged drought frustrates farmers

1.24,000 hectares in North lie fallow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Over 1.24,000 hectares of land for Aman cultivation lie fallow in 16 northern districts of the country due to lack of rainfall this year.

Agriculture Extension Department sources said they had set a target of around 16,70,000 hectare of land to be used for Aman cultivation in Rangpur and Rajshahi region. But only 15,46,000 hectare was used for cultivation until August 22.

The department sources said more than 63,000 hectares of lands in eight districts of Rangpur zone are left unutilised due to drought and lack of irrigation facilities. The department had targeted local and high-yielding Aman breeds on 9,99,140 hectares of land but the department only achieved around 9,36,000 hectares till August 22.

In Rajshahi zone, Aman on 6,10,000 hectares was achieved against the targeted 6,67,970 hectares.

Agriculturist Md Abul Bashar,



An unusual scene in Chalan Beel. People can hardly recall when the largest wetland in the northern region last dried up during the rainy season.

14-party calls hartal for Wednesday

Student strike today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition combine yesterday called a countrywide dawn to dusk hartal on August 30 to protest the killing of seven people by the law enforcers at Phulbari in Dinajpur.

The decision came at a three-hour long meeting between Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina and top leaders of the 14-party opposition combine at the AL's Dhanmondi office.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Expulsion of Asia Energy demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Electricity and Port yesterday demanded immediate cancellation of Phulbari coalmine project and expulsion of Asia Energy Corporation (AEC) from the country following the killings of locals agitated against the company on August 26.

It also demanded investigation into the killings, punishment to the persons responsible and compensation for the deceased and injured.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Energy adviser, Asia Energy CEO blame it on left parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Energy ministry adviser Mahmudur Rahman yesterday blamed a 'small group of leftist parties without any influence whatsoever' for orchestrating the deaths and injury to people at the Phulbari coalmine area in police firing.

Meanwhile, Chief Executive Officer of Asia Energy Bangladesh Gary Lye also blamed the organisers of the demonstration for the incident.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

PHULBARI COALMINE KILLING

Thousands defy ban, stage protest

STAR REPORT

Thousands of locals took to the streets in Phulbari yesterday violating section 144 during a daylong shutdown protesting Saturday's police firing on demonstrators against an open-pit coal mine project that left seven killed and around 300 injured.

The agitators vowed to continue their ongoing indefinite strike until Asia Energy (Bangladesh) Pvt Ltd, the British company operating the

Phulbari coalmine project, leaves the town.

Hundreds of members of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and police swooped on the demonstrators since morning.

Over ten thousand people participated in a namaz-e-janaza of the deceased at Nimalta crossing in Phulbari at 5:30pm.

Shops, offices and schools remained closed during the hartal while communication from Phulbari to nearby Birampur,

Nawabganj, Hakimpur and Ghoraghat upazilas has remained snapped since Saturday.

The protesters organised a protest rally at about 8:00am.

The law enforcers obstructed the rally at different places. The BDR and police dispersed the agitators whenever they tried to regroup and join the rally.

An agitator claimed that the BDR men also attacked their houses on Friday and looted valuables.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal brings out a procession at Muktangan in the capital yesterday protesting the killing of seven people during demonstrations in Phulbari coalmine area on Saturday.

AGREEMENT WITH ASIA ENERGY

Option open for govt to make pro-people deal

SHARIER KHAN

The 1998 deal with Asia Energy dictates that the company must accept whatever rules and regulations related to mining are changed anytime, says former chief of the Bureau of Mineral Development (BMD).

This means, the government can practically change or modify the Mines and Minerals Rules, 1968

to address the needs of modern times and change other policy issues to make the coalmine deal more acceptable to the people, experts say.

As per the law, Bangladesh can also cancel or revise the deal. The nation can penalise the contractor for its faults or violation of any mining rules and regulation.

The deal with Asia Energy gives Bangladesh only six percent royalty

for production of coal, and a nine-year tax holiday for Asia Energy -- the first nine years of production -- to be followed by 45 percent corporate tax.

Since the contractor is bound to accept changes of rules and regulations, the finalised draft-new coal policy can immensely benefit Bangladesh if adopted. However, for mysterious reasons, this policy

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Home orders enquiry

UNB, Dhaka

The home ministry yesterday ordered administrative inquiry into Saturday's firing on demonstrators at Phulbari in Dinajpur district, that left at least six people dead and more than 50 wounded.

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar also wanted to know from the energy ministry why the local people grew so angry against Asia Energy's coal mine project that led to this 'unfortunate incident.'

"This is unfortunate. I've asked the DC, SP and TNO for administrative

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Verdict of graft case against Ershad deferred

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday re-fixed September 11 for delivery of verdict on the graft case against Jatya Party Chairman HM Ershad involving allotment of plots to 49 people when he was president.

Judge SM Mojibur Rahman of the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court adjourned the delivery of verdict.

The same court adjourned the hearing of the gold smuggling case filed against the deposed president following a time petition by the prosecution lawyer.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

20 hurt as BNP factions clash before PM's Barisal rally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

At least 20 people, including four policemen, were injured in sporadic clashes between two groups of local BNP yesterday over establishing control over the venue of a meeting to be attended by the prime minister.

The two-hour long clashes between the supporters of lawmaker Mosharraf Hossain Mongu and nomination seeking central BNP secretary for law affairs advocate Joydul Abedin created panic in the area.

However, the meeting was held

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Hasina against magistracy power of law enforcers on poll duty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday demanded immediate cancellation of the 2001 rules that empowered the law enforcers including army personnel with magistracy power during their election duty.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

HOME SECY-LEVEL MEETING ENDS

Dhaka, Delhi to fight border crime together

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and India agreed to examine the possibility of quickly instituting a mechanism to combat terrorism and organised crime that often spill over the 4200km porous border the countries share as security figured high in the home secretary-level meeting.

Delegations of the two neigh-

boring countries yesterday concluded the four-day talks with agreement on holding regular meetings between their border forces, and joint media briefings by their local commanders, if 'an incident' takes place, "to ensure that truth is known to both sides".

It was decided that the Joint Boundary Working Group (JBWG) will visit the enclaves and areas

under adverse possession 'at an early date'.

Home Secretary Safar Raj Hossain led the Bangladesh side while his counterpart VK Duggal the Indian side at the 7th meeting of its kind that reached several agreements without setting any precise mechanisms or dates for their implementation.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Saudi prince offers highest \$330m for Rupali Bank

SARWAR A CHOWDHURY

Saudi Prince Bandar Bin Mohammad Bin Abdul Rahman Al Saudi is poised to take over Rupali Bank as he bids \$330 million for the state-run bank.

The Privatisation Commission yesterday declared the Saudi prince the highest bidder. Of the two technically fit bidders, the other one, Domestic Investors Consortium, offered \$100million.

Earlier in the day, an evaluation committee comprising representatives from Bangladesh Bank,

finance ministry, law ministry and consultants from the Privatisation Commission selected the two bidders out of four. Maa International Investment Ltd of Malaysia and JI Finance Ltd of the UK were disqualified for technical reasons.

"The price offer we've received for the Rupali Bank has exceeded our expectations. The World Bank and other multilateral donor agencies had suggested that we should sell the bank at a price ranging between \$100

to \$150 million," Privatisation Commission Chairman Enam Ahmed Chaudhury said adding that

he expected the price would be a maximum \$250 million.

"Now, we will place the offer at the commission's meeting tomorrow (today) for approval," he said.

On getting the nod from the commission, the offer will be sent to the government for final approval. "We hope we can wrap up the process within the next month," he said.

Replying to a query, the commission chairman said the technical committee marked the bidders on grounds of their efficiency, management and operations

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

BNP's NEC MEET

Young Turks ring changes in BNP

Oli's expulsion only matter of time, Ashraf's fate in hands of Khaleda

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

Junior leaders of ruling BNP backed by its Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman virtually won the race against senior rebel leaders over establishing supremacy within the party.

The rebel senior leaders think that the broadside launched against them by the junior leaders during the party's national executive meeting, held on Saturday, was pre-planned.

Sources said leaders of about 41 districts did not get the floor at the meeting while some young leaders who are very close to Hawa Bhaban got the chance and spoke without restraint.

Party sources said under pressure from the young group, the expulsion of Col (ret) Oli Ahmad from the party is only a matter of time now, due to his adverse comments on the party leadership especially on Tarique Rahman, also son of Party Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

But on the issue of Joint Secretary General Ashraf Hossain's expulsion some other senior leaders including the secretary general of the party are not in league with the juniors.

According to the decision of the NEC, the party chairperson and the standing committee will take decisions about Oli and Ashraf very soon.

"It was unexpected to talk about Ashraf at the NEC meeting as he had cleared his position last week and the party high command had expressed satisfaction about him," said a party leader adding that a group of leaders wants to fulfil its own interest using the name of Hawa Bhaban.

Khaleda Zia, who is also the prime minister of the country, asked her senior leaders to maintain party discipline. She criticised some senior leaders for their 'freestyle' speeches in the media, sources said.

Young leaders including Ruhul

JUDGES KILLING

HC verdict likely today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) is likely to deliver today the verdict in the death reference of seven militants, including Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) chief Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai, who were awarded death sentences in Jhalakathi judges killing case.

Jhalakathi District Additional Sessions Judge had sentenced the seven militants to death by hanging on May 29. Others to walk the gallows are JMB Majlis-e-Shura

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Fazil, Kamil getting degree, master's status

Cabinet Committee recommendations finalised

BSS, Dhaka

The cabinet committee on madrasa education yesterday finalised its recommendations for upgrading Fazil and Kamil degrees of madrasas to degree and master's levels.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the committee held

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

T&T incoming
FREE
totally!
with all banglalink
standard & m2m plus connections

Mizanur clinches unlikely gold

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

Mohammed Mizanur Rahman bagged a surprise gold in middle weight taekwondo for Bangladesh on the penultimate day of the 10th South Asian Games at the St

Joseph's College here yesterday. The venue, used for martial arts events ushu and taekwondo, would be envy for any educational institution as it has all probable facilities for sports. In addition to three full

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7